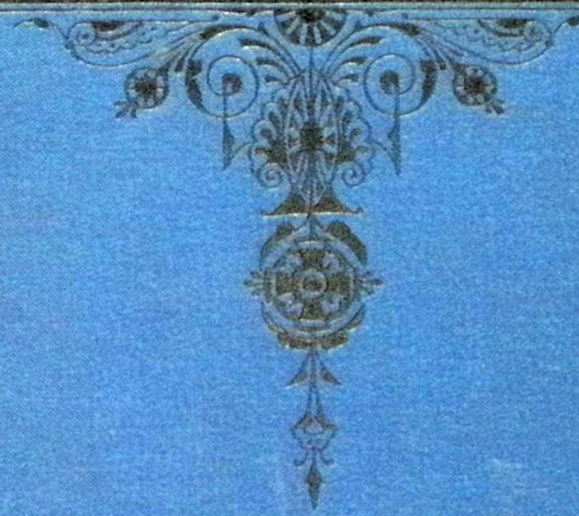




BARBERINE



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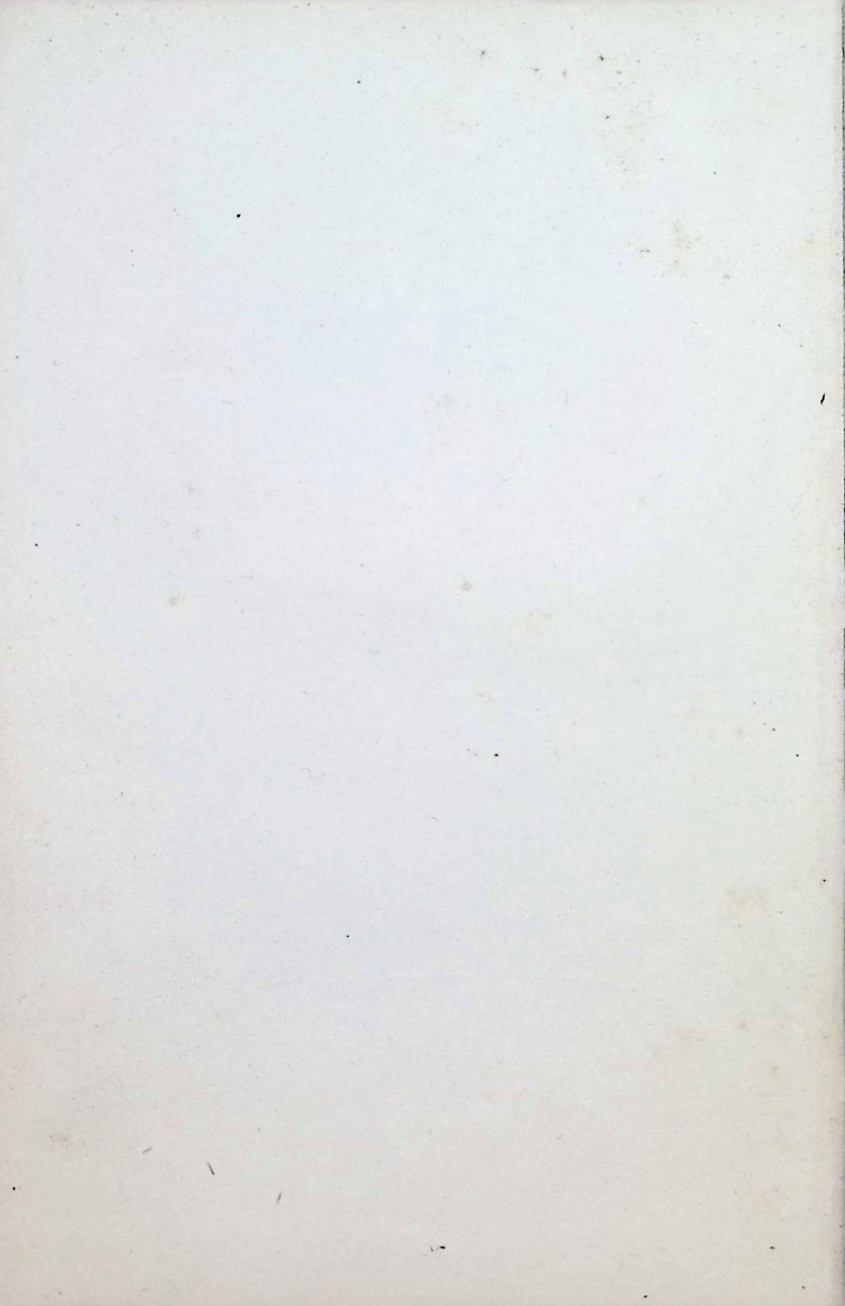
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BARBERINE:

OR,

A WOMAN'S DEVOTION.

ADAPTED BY

MARY NEAL SHERWOOD.

CHICAGO:
HENRY A. SUMNER & COMPANY.

1881

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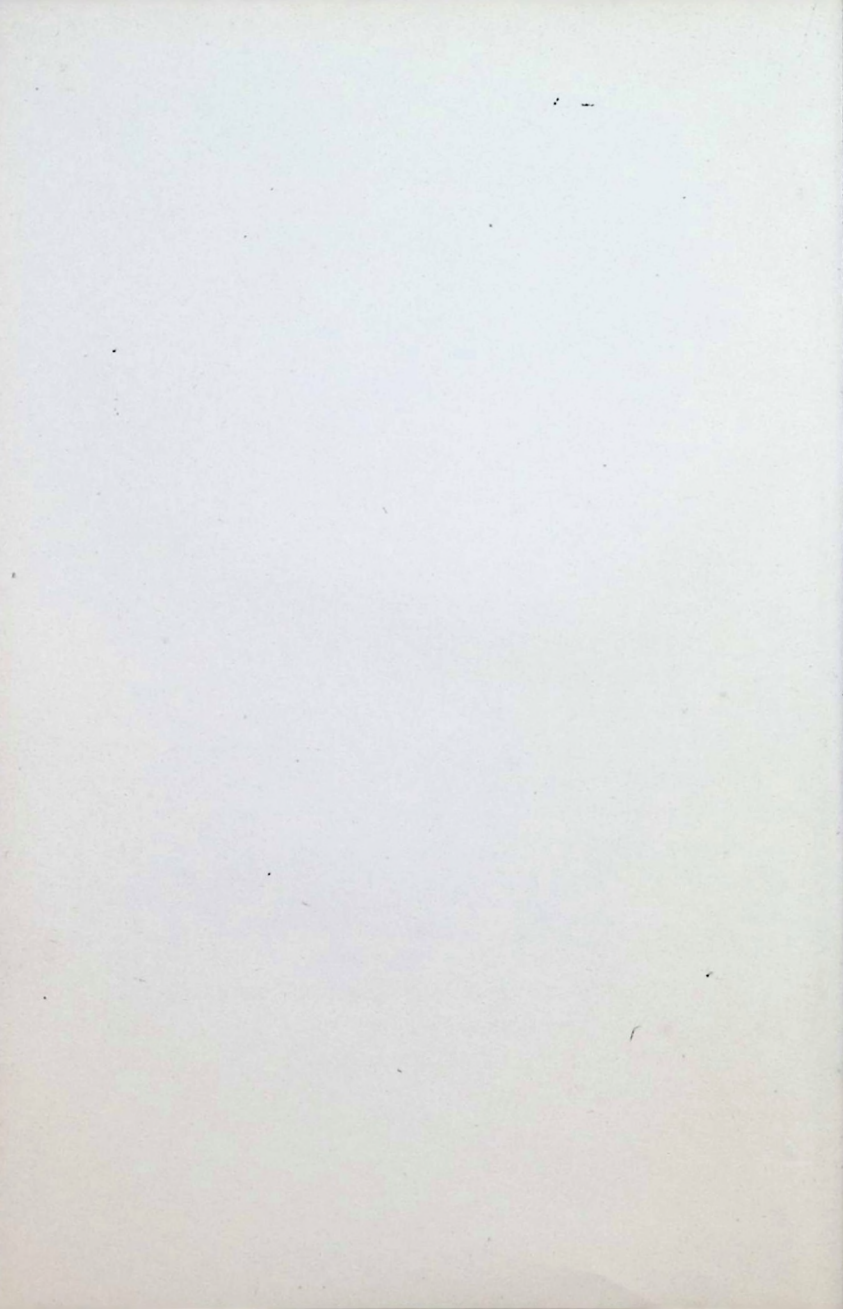
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BARBERINE.

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BARBERINE.

CHAPTER I.

THE WAY MEN LOVE.

Barberine's quarrel with Saint Bertrand made a great sensation at the opera, and was the topic of conversation in the *foyer* for at least a fortnight. Each person told the tale as he pleased — praising, blaming — condemning or making his little plea. The Vicomte was generally blamed. The women could never forgive him for having wished to marry her. As to the men, they were all eager to welcome her back, and, in the meantime, glorified her talents and her beauty.

"She is perfectly charming!" cried the younger set of men.

"She is an angel!" said the older ones.

Her return to the Opera was a triumph in every sense of the word. The General, who had heard her adventure more or less talked about, received her with a shower of flowers and three salvos of

applause. The subscribers hurried to her dressing-room, to congratulate and compliment her. She replied to all with courtesy, but without effusion. She had always been somewhat reserved, and now her reserve was almost gravity. Something had died within her, for one never loses a first illusion with impunity.

A month after her return, the number of her admirers could have been counted with difficulty. Each of them, as soon as she appeared in the *foyer*, hastened to pay his respects to her, and to utter some complimentary phrases.

At the head of these admirers must be placed La Gruelle. La Gruelle had always had an artistic admiration for Saint Bertrand. He denied it, now that he had behaved so badly toward Barberine, but his wish to become his successor, was in itself an honor. La Gruelle did his best to *afficher* the *danseuse*. He followed her everywhere, and her name was always upon his lips. He wearied her with his sighs and his protestations. His servant went every morning to inquire for her, and to carry letters, flowers, or huge packages of bon-bons. He met her on the Champs Elysées, walked with her, switching his boots with his cane, and assisted her deferentially into her carriage again; and was, in fact, the happiest man in Paris just at this time, for, that any one could resist him, never entered his head.

Next on the list of Barberine's lovers, was Cocodès. Cocodès had been unfortunate enough to

lôse, within the same year, his father, the Duc, and his grandmother, the Duchess Dowager. He was now, therefore, master of his own acts, and his fortune was far greater than that of La Gruelle. His life was much like that of other young men of fashion. He slept during the day, drank all night with his friends, played madly, and ran away from Paris occasionally, for a flying visit to his estates. In the Spring and Autumn, he rode steeple-chases, to the great detriment of life and limb, for the poor boy, although a good horseman, was sure to have a tumble at almost every race; and his head, his legs and arms, had all been seriously injured in turn.

Cocodès was not nearly as much in love with Barberine as was La Gruelle, but he was eager for excitement, eager to ruin himself, and thought there was no better way of doing so, than to call in the assistance of a pretty woman; and what prettier woman was there in Paris, than Barberine! Cocodès, therefore, laid deliberate siege to Barbarine, and was always hovering about her.

The third adorer was Rogatchef. He had recognized the fact that this place was vacant, and had at once entered the ranks; but he in no way rendered her conspicuous. He never spoke to her at the theater; but whenever she consented to receive him, he talked to her in the most serious and argumentative way, to persuade her that she could not do better than to accord him the preference over his rivals. Had he not loved her longer than they had? And did he not unite within himself all the most desirable

conditions: He was young, rich, well-born, com-
plaisant and generous, faithful and "settled down."

Barberine's fourth aspirant was a hideous old man of seventy—Lorrieux by name. For forty years this septuagenarian had not missed a single representation. The opera meant for him every pleasure in the universe. He regularly appeared each evening before the curtain went up; he was the last to leave the house, which he did with regret, and then not until the lights were extinguished. He had been admitted, as a special favor, to the *coulisses*, and was never by any chance seen among the audience. During the representations, he wandered about the flies, and during the *entr'actes* he took a seat in the *foyer*, where he never spoke to any one, except to the women, and to them in a very low voice, looking askance at them all the while. People knew very little about him, his fortune, or his antecedents. Perhaps he had none. Some youth who thought himself very witty, declared that Lorrieux was born at the opera, and others maintained that he lived there. The truth was that no one knew his residence, and he was never by any chance met in the street. The man was most eccentric; he never listened to a note of music, nor gave his opinion in regard to it to any one. His life was concentrated in his eyes, which were full of fire and passion. They were large, full, round, and black as ink, veiled by heavy lids fringed with long lashes. Lorrieux was a Colossus, six feet in height, and large in proportion. His feet were enormous. He took

long strides in walking, with his arms at his side, and his shoulders rounded. His retreating brow, suggesting a gorilla, was fringed with white hair. His face was full and rosy. His nose was large, with thick nostrils; his lips very red; teeth very white, and his ears set out from his head. His hands were clumsy, the veins upon them were like whip-cords, and his great, square fingers terminated in shining hard nails, cut into points. He wore a coat of such ample size, that he could wrap it twice around his body—a white cravat and black vest. His hat, which he rarely laid out of his hand, except when it was on his head, was invariably covered with crape; yet, no one could have told you for whom Monsieur Lorrieux was in mourning. The man had the air of an old wolf that had suddenly grown fat on an unexpected supply of rich meat.

The younger ballet dancers tolerated him, for he was generous and obliging. But now, in his declining years, he threw aside his air of retiring mystery, and suddenly showed strange signs of life. Barberine had worked this marvel. She even made him talk. One evening, he quietly joined a group of men, and entered into conversation with them. This made an enormous sensation, and it was discovered that Monsieur Lorrieux had a cavernous voice; and after this discovery, no one was surprised to see him move with elephantine grace about the *danseuse*, profiting by every occasion when she was alone, to frighten her with his sighs and terrify her with his compliments.

The last of Barberine's *prétendants* was the Comte de Perche. He was cold, stately, and perfectly *comme il faut*. His friends compared him to a *carafe* of *orgeat*. His life had always been discreet and secluded, and strangely enough, no one had gossiped disagreeably about him. He was courteous, generous and tolerant, with excellent manners, a distinguished appearance, although without any especial intellect, and seemed destined to enjoy a calm and commonplace affection. He had a great deal of natural delicacy and considerable sensibility. Left to his own devices at an early age, he had spent his life and his fortune much as he liked. His tastes were simple, however. He desired little else than to be loved. His *liaisons*, for he had had several already, had compelled him to distrust his power of inspiring affection, for he had received little in exchange for his love. If the Comte de Perche had been born a poor man, and compelled by stern necessity to battle with life, he would have become a misanthrope. But he had been a spoiled child from his birth. His health was excellent; his digestion, perfect. He had some few cultivated tastes, such as a love of reading. His unfortunate love affairs, therefore, only rendered him somewhat meditative. He considered himself fated to be deceived, and accepted this position without bitterness, and although cherishing a vague hope of vanquishing his ill luck, he did his best to rise superior to it.

Barberine's very sadness interested him. Bar-

berine, always grave, had become sad without precisely knowing wherefore. She did not know what had become of Saint Bertrand. She never heard any one mention his name, and was naturally much astonished at his sudden disappearance. Why did he come no more to the opera? Why was he not seen by his friends? When, and with whom did he leave? She asked herself these questions over and over again. Comte de Perche, seeing her so sad and silent, took it for granted that her experience had been of a nature which led her to distrust all men. He hoped he had found a congenial spirit, did his best to console her, and was the only one of all the men who admired her, who had the happy idea of speaking to her of her lost love.

A disinterested observer would have found it rather curious if he could have listened to the conversation addressed to Barberine by her five lovers. La Gruelle stood near the mantel, with one foot carelessly brought over the other, and his thumb caught through the button-hole of his vest.

"My dear child!" he said, "what has gone wrong with you to-day? I have never seen you more lovely, but I fear you have been weeping. Is that so? and why, pray? Are you ill?"

And when Barberine declared that she was perfectly well, he added with a sigh:

"It is I, after all, who is ill and suffering. If you would only condescend to listen to me, my love, my fortune and myself are at your feet. Yes, I repeat it: they are all at your feet."

Cocodès said to her a little later:

"Why so thoughtful, Mademoiselle? I am never thoughtful myself. You are a great beauty; on my life, you are! and the very best dancer in the whole civilized world. I am young and very rich; life is short; and I think it would be best if we could understand each other. If I don't seem to you very amusing, then make up your mind to sacrifice yourself for the happiness of another!"

"Ah! Mademoiselle," said Rogatchef, in an insidious tone, "I am sure that Hector is making love to you, and I am afraid you prefer him to me! and yet, I have loved you for so long a time. Tell me why you can not consent to listen to me? In what particular do I displease you? Give me a ray of hope, I—" An eloquent look completed the sentence.

Then came the stout Lorrieux, who became deep crimson as he poured out his passion:

"When I look at you dancing, Mademoiselle," he said, "it seems to me that I tread on air myself. But you dance too well—listen a moment. I have some magnificent diamonds which came to me from my grandmother, who was a favorite of Louis XV. These diamonds I am ready to bestow on you, in return for your smiles!"

Barberine answered these aspirants in succession, beginning with Monsieur La Gruelle:

"See," she said, "you are throwing away your time. I can never be more to you than a friend."

"Monsieur Hector," she said to the second,

"you have a delightful way of expressing yourself. I assure you that I find you very interesting; but it is impossible for me to follow your advice."

"Prince," she said, addressing Rogatchef, "I have but one wish in the world, and that is never to love again."

To the stout Lorrieux she answered:

"I am not your grandmother, and you are not the king, Louis XV."

And as she turned to go on the stage, she murmured to herself:

"What a pity! They all say the same thing! Can they not find any thing better to say to a woman, than that they are rich? Ah, me!"

And she drew a long sigh. She was weary of life. Existence seemed to her a burden too heavy to be borne. She had done her best to listen to these men with the hope that one of them might awaken some interest in her heart; but, no, one and all left it untouched. The Comte de Perche was the only one whose presence was agreeable to her. She was gratified by his sympathetic tone, as he leaned over her chair.

"Still sad, my child?" he would say; "I am profoundly sorry for you."

The result of Barberine's conduct was, that in a few months, all her admirers, wounded by her disdain, had, with the exception of the Comte de Perche, gone over to the enemy's camp. They began to decry her talent, to deny her beauty, and declared that she was growing ugly and short-wind-

ed ; and applauding her with the tips of their fingers, and finally, by a tacit agreement among themselves, they ceased to approach her in the *foyer*. They declared she was stupid, and had not a word to say for herself. They began to laud her rivals, and each of these men selected some one among the opera troupe, and affected for this woman an exaggerated passion.

La Gruelle set the example. He chose a girl known as Stella, who had no claims to beauty, but was clever and sharp with her tongue. Her wit and her language were those of a fish woman, and scandalized every body about her. La Gruelle, on more than one occasion, bitterly expiated his desire of revenging himself on Barberine ; for Stella ruled him with a rod of iron. He gave her jewels, horses and a fine hotel. After a time, from the lavishness with which she spent money, Stella became a power at the opera.

Cocodès became indifferent to women, and relapsed into the jockey ; spent most of his time in his stables, and finally disappeared from Paris. His name was never heard there, unless he had some especially perilous fall at some of the provincial race-courses.

Rogatchef was suddenly transformed from a miser into a prodigal. He lavished his wealth on the fair Heloise, and presented her with the most wonderful jewels, among which was a ring that cost six hundred thousand francs, and was the talk of Paris.

The ring was a simple gold hoop and one diamond—but of such size and whiteness!

As to Monsieur Lorrieux, no one knew exactly what he did; but his friend, Dr. Buthant, shook his head ominously whenever he saw him in the *foyer*, asleep in an arm-chair, with a purple face, and snoring. His memory was gone. His tongue was thick. He was awakened with difficulty, and could not be understood by the *figurantes* who laughed at his increasing corpulence.

The Comte de Perche continued to be faithful to Barberine. Seeing that she was, so to speak, punished by all her former admirers, he redoubled his attentions, that she might forget her isolation. When she was attacked in his presence, he defended her. When she was calumniated, he silenced the evil tongues. Whenever she danced, she saw him seated in his orchestra-stall, ready to encourage her with his applause. Rogatchef discovered that she received him at her house, and all the world began to say that the Comte de Perche had at last succeeded to the Vicomte de Saint Bertrand.

CHAPTER II.

"THE WAY THAT WOMEN LOVE."

And yet, the Comte was not Barberine's lover, in the sense in which the gay world of Paris use the word, and they were very much mistaken in their opinion. Ten months after the rupture between Barberine and Saint Bertrand, the Comte had not advanced an inch, in the siege he had laid to the *danseuse*. He, in spite of his coldness of manner, was really profoundly saddened by this; but all this time, he had carefully concealed his chagrin from her. One morning, however, Barberine said to him:

"What is the matter to-day? You are enigmatical and sententious. Have I wounded you in any way? I assure you that it was most unintentional, for there is no one whom I so much respect."

"And that is precisely what I feel," answered the Comte. "Friendship is a negative sentiment, and never leads to love. Did you hate me, I might indulge the hope that at some future day I might induce you to love me, for hatred is passion—love turned wrong side out!"

Barberine was sitting at her embroidery frame, and carefully threading her needles with silks. She turned around hastily.

"Do I hear aright?" she cried. "Can it be that you are reproaching me for not hating you?"

"I reproach you for nothing," answered the Comte, smiling with some bitterness. "I regret only that I have not been able to make you love me! That is all."

And as he was really hurt, he added—"I have probably been too devoted, too submissive, too respectful. I love you too much. The older I grow the more convinced I am that in order to please a woman, a man must not love her, or, at all events, he must not allow her to see that he loves her."

Barberine sat in thoughtful silence.

"I am inclined to believe that you are in the right," she said, at last.

The Comte started.

"You are certainly very frank," he answered, sadly.

She laughed a little. The Comte rose and began to walk up and down the room. He suddenly stopped before her.

"Shall I open my heart to you?" he asked. And without awaiting her reply, continued: "I can not understand you. You seem to be really attached to me; you are interested in all that concerns me; you are anxious if I am not well; you rejoice at any small success of mine. You know that my highest ambition is to be loved by you; you are kind-hearted, and have nothing of the coquette in your nature; your heart is free; and yet you will neither send me

away, nor accept me as lover or husband. Ah! Barberine, your conduct is incomprehensible."

Barberine looked disturbed.

"I have told you," she said, "that I would never marry you. And yet, you must not think me ungrateful. I am not worthy of you. You belong by birth and association to a world that does not tolerate such disparities, and that frowns on a *mésalliance*. If I were simply an artist, I might leave the stage to accept your hand. But I am, or rather, I have been, something more — something worse."

"Pshaw!" interrupted the Comte, impatiently. "This is the common-place reasoning of an untouched heart."

"Not so. It is the reasoning of an honest conscience. Every one knows, unfortunately, that I, for two years, lived under the protection of a man who—"

The Comte was about to speak.

"Let me continue," she said. "This can never be forgotten by any one. If I should consent to become your wife, you would remember my past, although you would have too much delicacy to remind me of it. You would think of it; so should I. You would suffer, and I should suffer more than you. Our existence would be frightful."

"Existence with you, my child, would be Paradise," answered the Comte.

Barberine shrugged her shoulders slightly.

"I wish to make you happy," she continued,

"but—" She hesitated, and colored. "May I speak frankly to you?" she asked.

The Comte nodded, too much moved to speak.

She went on.

"I treat you as a friend, you say. Yes, and why? Because the recollection of another man fills my heart, and I struggle constantly not to speak of him, even to you."

The Comte was utterly crushed. This was more than he had feared.

"Do you love him still?" he cried.

"No, I do not love him, but I can not efface from my recollection the two years we spent together. He was my first, my only love. And notwithstanding his conduct toward me, I would give half my life to know that he was not unhappy, for the thought of his misery breaks my heart. He is, and will always be to me, the one being apart from all others. I can never forget him. A first love is like a mother's first born."

"It is not worth while, it seems to me," answered the Comte, "for a man to be honorable toward a woman."

Barberine took his hand.

"Forgive me," she said, "for my inadequate response to your affection. I should never forgive myself were I to deceive you now. Perhaps with time, this memory will be effaced."

The Comte did not speak for some moments; then he said:

"If it were a mere question of his infidelity, I

could understand you. But, Barberine, very hard things are said of him in the world. His reputation is very bad. He is looked upon as an adventurer. Now, can you respect him?"

"I am afraid that I do not respect him," answered his companion, gently. "I think I only pity him."

"Pity him! Pity a fellow like that!" cried the Comte.

Barberine seemed hurt, while the Comte continued:

"He betrayed you, and rewarded you for your love by deserting you."

"True," answered Barberine with a frown, "but you can know nothing of his motives. He was overwhelmed with debts, and he knew that I would strip myself of every thing to pay them. His conduct was, in my eyes, characterized by a certain loyalty. He was in constant fear of arrest."

"Do you regret him, Barberine?"

"I do not know."

"It seems to me," said the Comte, "that a woman's love is always in exact proportion to the harm a man does her. You say you do not love him, and you defend him against the most deserved accusations. Are you disposed to deny all that the rest of the world affirms?"

"What does the world affirm?"

"That you are not the only woman whom he has treated in this way."

"That may be so. I was sure of it once," answered Barberine; "but I doubt it now."

"And why, pray?"

"Because he had so many enemies."

"My child," said the Comte, sadly, "your love for this man obscures your judgment. You know perfectly well—"

"I know," interrupted Barberine, hastily, "that it hurts me to hear him spoken ill of."

The Comte looked at her with compassion. She ought at that moment to have fully realized his delicacy. Most men would have replied with bitter words; but he felt only great pity, at the sight of this love which had outlived such treachery. His generosity was appealed to, and he said in a low voice, that trembled in spite of his best efforts:

"Shall I find him, and bring him back to you?"

Barberine started up. She at last understood something of what the Comte was suffering. "No," she exclaimed, "I never wish to see him again. But you must never blame him in my presence, for he can not be defended," and she hid her tears on the Comte's shoulder.

He, with a sigh, accepted the situation. He had always been in the habit of sacrificing himself for others. He kissed Barberine's forehead lightly, and placed her in a chair. "Rely on me," he said, "I will always be your friend."

She smiled through her tears.

"At all events I will try," he continued.

She was touched by his resignation.

"Do not hurry me," she said. "Trust to time. I shall conquer myself sooner or later. All that I ask of you is, never to speak of him to me, for"—she turned very pale, and hesitated. "For," she continued, "I despise him; and yet I can not tear him from my heart!"

"Poor child! poor child!" murmured the Comte, as he pressed her hands.

Barberine drew them away, and dried her eyes as she took up her embroidery.

"Yes, it is true," she continued. "Many a woman who sees me dancing and crowned with flowers, young and smiling, envies me. She says to herself that I am free to love wherever I please; that I need be dependent on neither lover or husband. But they little know what I have suffered. I absolutely have never had, during my whole life, two months of peace and happiness. If they could see the tears under the forced smiles of a ballet dancer, they would not envy my lot."

"I know all this; I know you have suffered greatly; but those sorrows are all in the past. Why can not you be happy now?"

"Because," she answered, passionately, "because I have known him. In vain do I tell myself that he has neither heart nor honor; that he never loved me; that he merely amused himself with me for a time; that he left me in a brutal way, when he knew that I adored him. But all this brings me no consolation. I can not forget that day after day he sat in that very chair, and that I shall never see

him there again. Love is incapable of reasoning. One does not love a man for his good qualities or his faults; one loves him in spite of his faults; we love because we can not help it; it is a fatality; we submit, and we suffer."

"It is certainly not I," said the Comte, "who is speaking of him now."

"True," answered Barberine; "forgive me. I am wild with curiosity; I should like to know what has become of him; if he is consoled, and what he is doing."

"I am told," said the Comte, watching her narrowly as he spoke, "that he continues to lead a very gay life."

Barberine turned very pale. "Are you telling me the truth?" she faltered.

"I never lie," he answered.

"Go on, then."

"He went to Italy, after he left you. He was seen at Naples, where he was the lover of a woman of rank. Then he returned to France. I saw him myself on the race ground at Chantilly. He was in the best of spirits, then."

Barberine did not speak for a moment.

"Why does he never come to the opera?" she asked, presently.

"I don't know. Probably because he is afraid to see you."

"Probably," answered Barberine. She and her companion talked of her childhood. She told how she had first come to Paris, and of where she had

first met Saint Bertrand, and of her debut at the opera, and of Gaskell, the impressario.

"He loved me sincerely; and it is a pleasure to know that I have been loved once in my life."

"You had better say twice," interrupted the Comte. "But what has become of Gaskell?"

"I do not know," answered Barberine. "I have written to him four times within the last year, but he has never answered me."

She sat with her eyes cast down, reflecting that Gaskell had prophesied precisely that which had taken place; and that he was probably dead, as he had taken no notice of her letters. She sighed, and a sigh answered hers. She lifted her eyes and met those of the Comte.

"You say that he is consoled?" she asked.

"So I hear."

"It is very strange," she murmured. "I am ashamed to say that I should prefer to know that he was unhappy."

"She loved him," thought the Comte de Perche. Barberine was standing at the window looking out with tearful eyes. Suddenly she turned, her cheeks were blushing, her eyes flashing, and as she threw her arms around the Comte's neck she said:

"And he is consoled, is he?"

Then, overwhelmed with shame, she tore herself away, and with low, convulsive sobs, threw herself on the sofa.

The Comte followed her; she pushed him away. "I love him!" she said. "I tell you, I love him!"

The Comte tried to calm her, but she would not listen.

"Leave me," she exclaimed; "you have slandered him."

"But, Barbarine!" stammered the Comte "it was you who slandered him, I say!"

"It was not he who deserted me. I drove him from me! I was base and cruel."

She buried her face in her handkerchief, and tried to choke down her sobs. The soul of the man who had himself so much to endure, was wrung with pity. He did not know how to soothe her. He would have gladly gone away, but did not know how to take his leave. He talked to her as if she had been a sick child. Every word he said irritated her. For the moment she hated him, and thought him ridiculous.

At last her tears were all shed, and she lay exhausted.

"I will never speak of him or of myself again," said the Comte, penitently.

"And you will do well, my friend," she answered.

"If it annoys you to see me, I will never come again," he said.

"Never come again! You may come every day. There is no danger."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I shall never be so foolish as to have another paroxysm of this kind. It wears me out, and pains you."

"Then," said the Comte, with a sigh, "I may continue to feel that time may aid me, and that when your sorrow is conquered—"

"It is conquered now," she answered hastily, "or will be to-morrow," she added more quietly.

"You will find me," he continued, "ready to give you my name, if you will take it."

"Thank you; and now leave me. I have no strength left, and my head aches. Adieu!"

When the Comte had gone, Barberine pulled her bell, and when her maid entered, the lady said:

"Charlotte, when the Comte comes in future, you will always remain in the salon with me. You can sit in that window, with your sewing."

Charlotte smiled.

"Is Madame afraid of the Comte," she asked with the familiarity of an old servant.

"Good Heavens! No. I am afraid of myself!" and then, in a lower voice, and as if speaking to herself, she added: "I am afraid of myself, and of my own anger."

CHAPTER III.

A BRILLIANT IDEA.

The Comte de Perche left Barberine with a heavy heart. Not only did he feel that she did not love him, but he was also convinced that he could never hope to win her heart. He resigned himself, sadly cherishing a faint hope that his constant assiduities and unfailing patience would finally gain the day.

"Who can tell!" he said to himself; "women are so eccentric. The first chance I have, I will give her the history of my life. I will tell her how I have always been misunderstood, and she may be touched!"

The next morning, full of this idea, he went to see her. Charlotte showed him into the salon. Barberine was deep in conversation with a middle-aged man, who held her hand.

The Comte did not know this person, and was about to retreat; but Barberine had seen him. Running to meet him, she presented Mr. Gaskell, the American impressario, who had made such a noise in Paris, a few years before. But those who knew him in those palmy days, would hardly have recognized him now. He looked old and worn. His

ruddy face had changed to a yellowish pallor, while his reddened eyelids gave him the air of suffering from a severe cold. His costume was as careful as of yore, and of the style affected by Americans—loud plaids, conspicuous watch-chain, and thick, solid boots.

He reached Paris only that morning, and had just entered Barberine's salon. She merely had time to tell him how it was that she had been led to break with Saint Bertrand, which Gaskell heard with great joy, in the midst of which the appearance of the Comte de Perche threw him into new perplexities.

"Was there ever such luck as mine!" he said to himself, as Barberine greeted the Comte with such gay familiarity. "Just as I hoped once more, there comes, as usual, some person to take up a position between us."

He greeted the Comte courteously, however, for he was less to be feared than Saint Bertrand.

"Sit down!" said Barberine; "and you, Charlotte, may take that chair over there by the window. And now, Mr. Gaskell, we are ready to hear all that has happened to you in the last two years."

"Alas!" cried the impressario, "you will hear little that is agreeable, for nothing succeeded with me in New York. I took over with me a capital vaudeville company, each member selected with the greatest possible care—such voices and such legs! My young ladies united all that could please the most refined tastes. I had, moreover, a young pre-

mier, who was superbly handsome—tall, dark and of the most interesting pallor. But on my arrival in the United States, I found all America carried away by a seal—yes, a talking seal, as it was claimed. It said papa and mamma, which was, of course, quite extraordinary for an amphibious creature; but as it did nothing else, one would suppose that the curiosity of this people might have been easily satisfied. However, this seal made a colossal fortune in America. There was nothing else talked of, and the best society of New York, every evening for three months, assembled to see this creature make a bow! My troupe was a frightful *fiasco*, and at the end of six months, I was obliged to break it up.”

“How unfortunate,” cried Barberine; “and after that what did you do?”

“I yielded to the taste of the public. As the Americans seemed to have taken a fancy to animals, I bethought me of my old trade. You must know,” continued Gaskell, turning to the Comte, “that I was once the proprietor of a menagerie, and therefore knew how to train animals. I unearthed one, not of a very rare species, I admit, but I made him what I wanted. The creature was only a poodle, a common poodle, but it had five legs! Two in front and three behind; and in addition to this attraction whistled admirably. I must admit, between ourselves, that this whistling was not spontaneous. I placed between his teeth a very simple arrangement of wood, just as we went upon the

stage, and my poodle would have whistled the talking seal into oblivion, but unfortunately for me, the very day that my poodle was to appear, the New York world went crazy over a rare bird, and that bird was Jenny Lind! Who would have thought that the Americans would have taken but one stride from a seal to a *cantatrice*. But that was the case. She was feted like a queen. Young men of fashion dragged her carriage; serenades were given her night after night. Washington himself could not have received more attention. In short, she drove them all crazy, and carried off millions, and I was left in the lurch as before—myself and my poodle.”

“And then?” said Barberine, unable to restrain her laughter.

“Oh, then,” cried Gaskell, “I swore on the remains of my beast, for the creature was choked to death by his whistle, that I would dethrone Jenny Lind, and I would have no help from any one. An idea occurred to me, such as comes only to empty stomachs, and I resolved to oppose bird to bird, and not being able to find a bird that sang like Jenny Lind, I resuscitated one that should fill the soul of the beholder with awe. Do you know what an epyornis is? No? Then I will tell you. It is a gigantic bird whose remains have recently been found in Madagascar—the race having been extinct for centuries. But where was I to find an epyornis? I had seen in a Philadelphia magazine a drawing of one which had been constructed from the fossil remains; it was the size of an ox and as tall

as a youth of sixteen. I deliberated over the matter for some time, and then I decided to become my own epyornis. Your woman over there by the window, my dear, is shaking with laughter; but I did not laugh; my dinner that day had been a half bunch of radishes. To cut a long story short, I was for six months the delight of a mighty crowd. It took me two hours to dress. First, I was rubbed all over with pitch, and then rolled in feathers; my feet were sheathed with India rubber of which claws were made; my arms were drawn behind, and to them were fastened huge wings; my head totally disappeared under an enormous crest cut from a sheep skin. When all was arranged I walked on the stage in front of a scene representing a tropical landscape, and uttered a wild cry. Heavens, how warm I was! Every body went to see 'the phenomenal bird'—that was what the newspapers called me—and in one month I raked in one hundred thousand francs. The money was well earned, I assure you. Jenny Lind was forgotten, and she went to Havana. I should have quadrupled my profits if I had not received a letter from you."

"And how did that interfere?" asked Barberine, in some wonder.

"You will see. One evening as I was finishing dressing, that is to say, finishing feathering myself, I heard the spectators becoming quite impatient; this did not prevent me, however, from looking at a letter postmarked France, that was brought in. I could not touch it, for my hands were tied behind

me; I could not wait, and so begged the manager of the theater where I appeared, to read it to me in a low voice, he standing just behind the tropical canvas, and I moving slowly and ponderously up and down. As soon as I was on the stage, and had fairly begun my nightly promenade with my legs very far apart and neck stretched forward, he began the letter. The public was so enthusiastic that I lost much of what he said. That letter was the only one I ever received from you; the others were probably lost in the mail, and this one related Saint Bertrand's abominable conduct. You may imagine how I felt on hearing this recital, so totally unprepared as I was. I was stifling with heat and rage, and finally I forgot where I was; I broke the strings that held my hands, and clasping them together, exclaimed: 'Poor child! how she must have suffered.' These unexpected words produced upon the public a most startling effect.

" 'A miracle!' cried some one in the boxes; 'the bird talks.'

"But those who were in the orchestra chairs called out: 'It is not a natural bird. We have been cheated.'

"I saw that my hour had come; and I suddenly stood up straight; the bird had grown two feet taller, his wings fluttered convulsively, his tail went up to the middle of his back, and his legs were as long as those of an ostrich. But this was of small importance to me just then. Amid a shower of apples, oranges, and nuts, I made my escape. The

next day the theater was closed, and in less than a week I was on my way to France. I have told you a story which, were you to read it in a romance, you would not believe; but it is every word of it true; and the worst of it all is that since then I have never been able to eat a mouthful of poultry of any kind. Were I to eat a roast chicken, I should regard myself as a cannibal."

Gaskell being in the mood, regaled his hearers with many wonderful stories in regard to his life in the United States, which Barberine found immensely interesting.

A few days later she confided to him all that had passed between herself and the Comte de Perche. Gaskell had taken a fancy to the Comte, and knowing very well that Barberine would never feel toward himself other than the affection of a daughter, he made the heroic resolution to immolate himself on the altar of friendship, and one morning called on the Comte to tell him of his intentions.

He found the young man outstretched on a sofa, in a most melancholy attitude.

Gaskell spoke abruptly. "Comte," he said, "it is not worth while to be dismal; you must act. Barberine has informed me that you have offered her your hand and your name. She has also confided to me the motives which withheld her from accepting your offer. I consider these motives as utterly without weight. I have determined that she must marry you. You alone can make her hap-

py. But we must be politic to obtain the wished-for result. Will you accept my coöperation?"

"Accept it! Ah, my dear Mr. Gaskell, do you know that it is life itself which you offer to me?"

"It is more than life," answered Gaskell, sentimentously; "it is happiness."

"But how will you conquer Barberine's prejudices? She loves that blackguard, Saint Bertrand, still; and so long as she loves him, we shall lose all our time and our trouble."

"In the first place, she does not love him; she only thinks she loves him, which is not at all the same thing. Now, in my opinion, she must be thoroughly enlightened in regard to that rascal. She must see him as he really is, and must be made to detest him. To gain this end I know an infallible method."

"And what is that method?" asked the Comte.

"The same that you have already tried, but with the important difference that it is I not you, who attempts it. The child will listen to any thing I may see fit to tell her."

"I am ready to agree to any thing you propose, but I must confess that I do not share your confidence."

"And why?"

"Simply because Barberine, like most women, becomes all the more obstinate when she sees people ready to combat her determination. Because—far from discouraging her, obstacles only confirm her

resolution. Because—whatever may be said to her to open her eyes, she will regard as prompted by prejudice, and will only make new excuses for him whom she loves. Because—I am invariably unlucky, and never succeed in any thing I undertake, and never hope to be loved, and feel that I am destined to die without once encountering an affection that responds to mine.”

“Come! come!” said Gaskell, “you must not allow yourself to be discouraged. Let me do it all. I only ask that you shall never say one word against Saint Bertrand before Barberine. Even when you hear me tear him to pieces, and hear Barberine indignantly defend him, you are not to open your mouth, unless it may be to join in Barberine’s defense. This will appear very generous in her eyes, and it is quite possible that in the end, she will be indignant with you for agreeing with her, and suddenly, when you have relinquished all hope, will turn round and adore you.”

The Comte smiled faintly.

“This is very subtle reasoning, Mr. Gaskell.”

“Do you think that I am not aware of that fact? Of what use are age and experience if they do not cultivate subtilty?”

This agreement was carefully carried out. Almost every day Gaskell, with Machiavellian astuteness, dashed in to Barberine like a bomb-shell. It was only necessary to glance at him to understand that he was the bearer of strange tidings. She, of course, questioned him; but Gaskell required much

coaxing. When he considered that Barberine's curiosity was sufficiently excited, he would tell some preposterous story, beginning with:

"Well, if you must know, that monster of a Saint Bertrand just passed me in a tandem team, with a showy looking woman at his side. Every body was staring. It seems to me that he is never satisfied unless he is making himself conspicuous."

Barberine turned pale.

"I dare say that it was not he, after all," said the Comte de Perche.

Another day Gaskell stated that the report was in circulation that Saint Bertrand had just inherited several millions from some woman — a woman who adored him, and whom he had made miserable.

Barberine sighed.

"It is not worth while to believe all that one hears," observed the Comte de Perche. "Monsieur de Saint Bertrand has many enemies."

"And very justly," answered Gaskell, indignantly.

Again did the Comte, his secret ally, take up the defense of the absent.

"He has not always behaved himself well, but he has an excuse," he said.

"And what may that be?"

"The example of modern society. No one is contented with spending his income. Speculation, fast and furious, is the order of the day. Every one

mortgages his property, and then plunges into debt; each strives to outshine his neighbor, and as a natural consequence wealth becomes of paramount importance. As for myself, I am always ready to find an excuse for the follies of those about me. Example is usually contagious. I am told that Monsieur de Saint Bertrand lives alone; it may be that he has some secret sorrow—some remorse, possibly—and seeks some distraction.”

Barberine looked at the Comte with some surprise.

But one day Gaskell came in with news that Saint Bertrand was about to marry a widow, fifty-four years of age, of princely birth, and more than princely fortune.

“Happy man,” said Comte de Perche.

“No, he is not happy,” answered Barberine. “No man can be happy who does an act like that. For a young man to marry an old woman—for a poor man to marry a rich woman—means, too often, that he will spend her money, and desert her. That is what will be done in this case, for I know Saint Bertrand thoroughly.”

The Comte did not reply, and after that day Barberine never uttered Saint Bertrand’s name; and Gaskell, thinking he had done enough, imitated her silence.

Barberine was still very sad. The society of her two friends was all for which she cared, and this she had daily.

One evening Gaskell, coming in suddenly, saw the Comte holding her hand, and heard him saying something in a low voice. As he concluded, Barberine lifted her handkerchief to her eyes, and Gaskell at once leaped to the conclusion that she had accepted the Comte

CHAPTER IV.

AN ACCIDENTAL MEETING.

We must now give to our readers a brief account of Saint Bertrand. When his *liaison* had begun with Barberine, he was the lover of a beautiful Polish Countess. He had been her confederate in a plot of which she was the moving spirit—a plot against the Russian government. The Countess Wanda had entrusted to Saint Bertrand most important papers—papers which involved not only her own safety, but that of hundreds of her countrymen. When Saint Bertrand left Paris with Barberine, he carried with him to Baden this package of papers—not because at that time he had any intention of making use of them, but because he did not know where to place them, so they would be safe, and where, too, he could lay his hand upon them at short notice. It was at Baden that he made the acquaintance of the Princess Méléline, a spy in the employ of the Russian government. This lady was beautiful, fascinating and wealthy, and was attracted by Saint Bertrand. She watched him night after night at the gambling-tables. She knew of his former *liaison* with the Countess Wanda, whose movements and acts she was especially de-

puted to watch. One night, therefore, when she had seen him lose from the beginning to the end of the evening, she sent for him, and asked him abruptly if he had no information to sell, in regard to the Countess. She laughed at his shocked face, but at last gained possession of the papers, as well as of Saint Bertrand himself.

These papers the Princess sent at once to St. Petersburg. The Russian government at once recognized their importance, and also the fact that nothing could be done then, for the individuals concerned in the conspiracy were scattered from one end of Europe to the other. They must wait until they returned to Poland, and when they were there, the signal must be given, and all arrests made upon the same day. The Countess Wanda was left in apparent liberty; but she, as well as her husband, was watched more closely than ever. Her servants were all bought over. Every letter that went from the house, or was addressed there, was examined, and often copied, and every word uttered by them or their guests, was reported to the police.

The Countess suspected this espionage, but was not alarmed, for her confidence in the honor if not in the fidelity of Saint Bertrand, was absolute. She was anxious, however, to hear from him, and racked her brain to discover some way of seeing him, with safety to him, as well as to herself. She could find none, however, and left Paris for her home in Varsovie, where, in the vaults below her house, the conspirators met nightly. Time went on

until three years had elapsed since she had seen or heard from Saint Bertrand. He, in the meantime, had almost forgotten his treachery toward her, and had begun to believe that the papers were, after all, of small consequence. He, as the Comte de Perche had told Barberine, went to Italy, and had been seen at Paris, in London, and then in Paris again. He gambled and associated with the lowest of men and of women. He contracted new debts, and fought two duels. He never spoke of Barberine, nor appeared at the opera. He had become graver, more sarcastic and sceptical than of yore. A spirit of cold calculation had developed itself in him by slow degrees. One fine morning he disappeared from view. Some people said he was in prison, others that he was dead, and one imaginative spirit declared he had gone to England to obtain a legacy bequeathed to him there. But neither of these reports was true, for Saint Bertrand had not left Paris. No one had seen him, notwithstanding the remarkable adventures attributed to him by Gaskell.

Barberine, however, was one day haunted by a vague presentiment that her old lover was again to mingle in her life. This day was a fine Sunday at the end of July. Gaskell had left Paris to visit one of his old New York friends, who lived at a short distance in the country. He would not return until in the evening, when the Comte de Perche who had been ill all day, had written to Barberine to say that he with Gaskell would call and

see her, if his physician would permit him to go out. Barberine had been alone all day. It had been one of those days which Parisians call superb, probably because of their great rarity. Not a cloud flecked the clear blue sky; not a breath of wind lifted the fine white dust that lay upon every thing. The heat was really intense. All the shops were closed, and Paris, usually so crowded, had the desolate look of a plague-stricken city. Half of its inhabitants had gone into the country, in search of coolness and freshness, and the other half kept themselves within shelter. The carriages stood at the stands, with the horses and coachmen asleep. Occasionally an omnibus crawled past, and at six o'clock the doors were opened, chairs were brought out, and men in their shirt-sleeves sat about, and talked of the heat. Barberine, who was to dance the next night, could not summon strength to go to her lesson, at noon, as usual. She spent the hottest hours asleep on a sofa, but about four o'clock went to la Rue Drouet, and ascended the two long flights of stairs to the hall, where she unwillingly practiced the most difficult of the steps she was to execute the next day. At six o'clock she dressed herself again in a light muslin, and wearing a pretty straw bonnet, and carrying a large white parasol, started homeward. She looked wonderfully pretty, for both eyes and complexion were more animated than usual.

This was the hour that Paris was more deserted than ever, and Barberine was struck by its air of

desolation; the streets looked endless to her. As she stopped at the corner of the Boulevard and la Rue Drouet, she looked first to the right, then to the left. On the right, up to the Madeleine, almost a quarter of a league away, she saw only a stretch of gray pavement; on the left, as far as the Gymnase, the view was the same. Opposite, was la Rue de Richelieu, the sun gilding the fronts of the tall houses; not a carriage nor a foot-passenger varied the monotony; a few chairs were in front of a door, and a woman was washing the sidewalk, that was all.

But just as Barberine stopped, a man turned out of la Rue de Richelieu, and stood still on the other side of the walk, looking at her. He had come out of one of those ignoble houses in the rear of la Fontaine Moliere. He was a man who was still young; something in his appearance indicated both birth and breeding, in spite of his look of abject poverty. Notwithstanding the heat his coat was buttoned to his chin; it was a black coat, originally well cut and well made, but was not fitted to his figure; the waist was too short, the sleeves too tight, and had been carefully mended; a black silk cravat, all in slits, was bound around the man's throat. Evidently he wore no shirt, although well-worn cuffs emerged from his sleeves; he wore no gloves; his pantaloons were too long, and his boots were in holes; his hat was the ghost of a hat, deformed and shabby. In spite of his costume, the man had the air of a god, but it was that of a fallen god. There was a look of haughty pride that suggested some

heathen divinity; he was an Apollo driven from Olympus. He walked along, absorbed in thought, and a bitter smile upon his lips. Hatred, envy and regret blazed in his blue eyes; a close observer would have read in them regret that life had brought him so little, disgust with himself and with others, and also something in addition, something implacable, which has no name, and which is precisely the opposite of pity.

The brilliancy of the sky, the heat, and the solitude, all added to the effect produced by this man. He looked slowly toward the Boulevard, and then, as if he did not care in which direction he walked, crossed the street. Barberine walked on, with her parasol supported against her shoulder, the long folds of her muslin skirt gracefully gathered up in one hand. She was slowly moving toward la Rue Taitlor. The young man, vaguely attracted by her youthful figure, followed her so quickly that he was soon at her side.

Finding that he was alone with this well-dressed woman, his manner changed; he assumed an humble, almost obsequious air, as he murmured a few words. Barberine, who did not look up, saw only his feet, and supposed that the man was asking charity. But she had not heard aright. He had merely told her that she was beautiful. She stopped; turned and gasped for breath. Could she believe her eyes! It was her old lover who stood before her. He, too, recognized her at the same moment, and looked at her very strangely. His eyes had the

expression of a dog that feared a kick from his master. Barberine felt her limbs tremble under her, and she turned very pale. He saw this.

He shrugged his shoulders and threw his arms apart, as if to show her how miserable was his condition, and then in a voice, which, low and trembling, was yet music in her ears, said simply

“You see!”

This was all. Could any thing have been more eloquent?

Barberine was chilled to the heart.

“Is this you?” she cried, her heart overflowing with mingled pity and horror. She literally could not articulate another word. After a moment or two she added:

“I thought you were rich. I was told —”

“You see!” he repeated, with the same gesture; and then added:

“I have not eaten for two days.”

He feared lest she should place some money in his hand, which would have been worse than death to him. But she did not think of doing that. Astonishment and compassion paralyzed her. She accused herself of being to blame for his poverty. She was angry with Gaskell, who had talked so much and told her so little. She was also ashamed and afraid of being seen and recognized, while she was speaking to this man who had more the air of a hungry bandit than of a beggar. But there was not a human being in sight.

He went on:

"I know not where to lay my head!"

"Why did you not come to me?" she asked.

He dropped his voice.

"Because," he said, "I was told that you loved another."

"It is not true!" cried Barberine.

The energy of that denial brought a faint flush to his cheek.

"I disgust you," he said, sadly. "If you could but know what I have suffered. Each day for the last year has been an agony to me."

She opened her lips to speak. He understood what she wished to say, and went on:

"The privations I have endured have been nothing; I refer to the stings of remorse which have devoured my heart. Oh, Barberine! I behaved abominably toward you; but I have been well punished."

"Let us walk on," she said, suddenly. "You must tell me every thing."

He followed her meekly, saying under his breath:

"You are kindness itself; I am ready to die, now that I have seen you once more."

She shuddered

A *fiacre* passed, and she made a sign to the coachman. As Saint Bertrand entered the carriage he smiled with an air of ferocious triumph.

"I should have killed myself long ago," he murmured, "but for the hope of seeing you once more."

"Hush!" she said; "I can not hear you say such things."

"I must say them, for you are my divinity."

"Can you not see," she sobbed, "that you are killing me? I can bear no more."

He felt that his appearance shocked her, and he sank into the bottom of the carriage and kissed her feet.

CHAPTER V.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

Charlotte was almost paralyzed when she recognized, in the ragged man who came in with her mistress the Vicomte de Saint Bertrand. She involuntarily tried to close the door upon him, but Barberine waved her aside, and bade her remain in the ante-room, while she led her former lover into the salon and shut the door.

Saint Bertrand stood in silence; he had the air of a beggar who, coming into a house, is doubtful in what way he will be received by its master. Barberine said nothing, beyond giving him several quiet, imperative directions. She, herself, hastily prepared a bath in her dressing-room for him, and then bade him go there at once. She closed the door upon him with an air of mingled disgust and anger. He entirely understood her, however.

While he took his bath, Barberine sent Charlotte to a store-room to find a certain trunk which Saint Bertrand had left with her, and which she thought held linen and clothing. The trunk was found, and on opening it a complete suit was discovered.

When Saint Bertrand was dressed in this cos-

tume, Barberine was able to look at him without horror. He was still elegant, and his air was distinguished. Much of his beauty was gone, his pallor was excessive, deep lines were worn into his face, and his eyes were sunken. His long beard lengthened the oval of his face, his hair was uncut and uncombed, while his manner was uneasy and doubtful, as if he were not quite sure of the reality of what had taken place.

He began to explain, and to utter his thanks, but Barberine would not allow him to continue. She could not remove her eyes from him, and when he took his seat at a table elegantly served, she waited upon him with the most assiduous attention. Charlotte moved about the room quiet and grave. When the young man's hunger was appeased, he said to himself that it would not be a bad idea to make an ally of the waiting woman. He, therefore, snatched her hand as she passed him, and said gently:

"You see, Charlotte, I have come back, like the Prodigal Son."

Barberine ate nothing, and when the repast was over she led him to her boudoir. The sun was sinking behind the horizon; through the open window came a soft breeze, bringing with it delicious fragrance from the plants on the balcony. The *danseuse* seated herself upon the sofa, he upon the floor at her feet. She looked down upon him gravely and tenderly. She could hardly believe that this was the man who had spoken to her upon the Boulevard. She felt as if he had never been out of her

sight; as if the last year of her life were utterly annihilated; and then, with a swelling heart, asked herself if it were possible that she still loved him.

He saw that she was now waiting for him to speak. For an hour he had been turning over in his mind what he should say to her. Fortified by his comfortable dinner, and encouraged by her gentleness, he kissed her hand, and, looking at her anxiously, said:

"I owe my very life to you. When you met me I was eager for death; but it was not poverty alone that crushed me—it was the recollection of you. I know that you have done for me, only what you would do for any friend in a similar position. I understand that you are prompted only by pity, for how can you love me after my conduct toward you? I ask nothing of you; I hope for nothing. And yet, if you are the same kind woman I once knew, you will allow me sometimes to live in the light of your countenance."

She did not reply. He shook his head sadly; then he went on:

"I will not attempt to make any excuse, and yet—"

Barberine frowned; he instantly changed his tone, and cried out:

"No, I have no excuse. I betrayed you. I am unworthy of a look or a word."

"What have you done since?" she said.

"Since then I have done my best to forget you. I have traveled, I have played, and I have lost. I

am overwhelmed with debts. Through it all, I have been haunted by recollections of you."

"But why did you not apply to your father?"

"I do not know where he is."

She had a host of questions to ask, and did not know where to begin. He, however, did not care to be too closely interrogated, and throwing himself upon his knees before her, poured forth the emotion which his desperate condition awakened within him.

"I implore you," he cried, in tender tones; "I implore you, after you have given me this glimpse of Heaven, not to cast me back into Hell. Do not drive me away. I can not endure the life of the past few months! You do not know what it is to feel that the police are on your track; to have neither credit nor friends; to be at the end of your resources; and to feel that without money you are helpless. You do not know what it is to see yourself obliged to sell some trifle every day, to buy bread, until an hour comes when you have nothing left to sell; and then to see yourself, after having always enjoyed every luxury, fall to all the painful degradations of life—to sleeping on a bench under a tree, to dining off a crust of bread thrown to you as to a dog; you can not easily imagine what it is to ask oneself where one is to dine the next day, and what you will do when the rags with which you are covered drop off! I am not afraid of death, Barberine, but I am afraid of cold—of wind and rain—snow and ice—of hunger, sickness and dirt. How

can I bear all these again? Once, I never knew what it was, not to yield to a wish as soon as I had formed it. You yourself assisted in spoiling me. You loved me—for you did love me once, Barberine—and you will not believe me when I tell you of all the misery through which I have lived. I ought to have worked, you will say, but I do not know how to work. I hoped each day that the morrow would have something better in store for me. I did not venture into this part of the city, because I was so well known here, and because I feared to meet some of my former associates. My rags struck horror to my own soul. I was haunted, too, by the recollection of the happy days we had passed together in this *Quartier*. But at night I came here, and looked up at your window. You slept, and I shivered! Night after night, I was drenched with rain, and dying of hunger—hunger of the soul, and hunger of the body. Will you never forgive me? I have been bitterly punished, dear!”

She gazed at him, asking herself if this were really Saint Bertrand. Saint Bertrand had always been haughty and reserved. She had never before heard him speak with this passionate humility. He leaned toward her—for the room was growing dark—that he might read her answer in her eyes.

“You think me mean-spirited, do you not? Well then, yes, I am mean-spirited, for I can not live without you. I prefer to die.”

He spoke with the feverish agitation of a spoiled

child, who seeks to win a smile from a justly offended mother.

"Forgive me! Forgive me!" he repeated. "You must forgive me. You must love me! Do you hear what I say, Barberine? You must love me!"

And as he grasped her hands, he said:

"Speak to me — why do you not speak to me? You brought me here three hours ago, and in all that time you have not given me one kind look. Ah! you love me no longer!"

He seemed carried away by despair. He kissed her hands, and spoke of their beauty. He extolled her eyes and her lips, and reproached her again for her coldness. Barberine was stunned and bewildered by his volubility. She did not know what to say to him, and the picture he had painted of his poverty and despair, made a most painful impression upon her.

She was amazed that he was still so fascinating; but his attractions were those of his person alone, for she very well knew, that neither in mind or heart was he worthy of affection. What was the strange charm that lingered about him, and enabled him to retain the love of this woman? She did not know herself. She listened to him with a stunned sort of feeling. She did not think of his words; she heard only, and was thrilled only, by the music of his voice. In fact, it mattered little what he said. His eloquence lay in the tones of his voice. Happy again in feeling him near her, she yielded to her emotion. She had forgotten the impression he made

on her when she saw him in his rags, and it seemed to her as if she had been asleep for a year, and had suddenly awakened. Notwithstanding all her love and her joy, a dull suspicion lay in her heart.

He had a vague perception of this fact, and seated himself close at her side. The *actor* intensified his part, the *musician* varied his airs, and he held her under the charmed influence. Barberine listened, and the memory of all her wrongs—of his treason and his turpitude, faded away. Suddenly an imprudent word, a veiled sarcasm, escaped him; the charm was broken, the scales fell from her eyes, and she repulsed him with a look of terror. He realized his mistake, but he had gone too far to recede. He meant to triumph, then and there.

As she turned to fly, he caught her arm.

“You shall not leave me,” he cried. “You belong to me, for I love you! I shall stop at nothing. If you have a lover, I will kill him, and if you have none, and are simply trifling with my despair, I will kill you! Take care! I am desperate. Ah! no, my child, do not tremble, for I worship the very ground you tread upon. I alone should be punished for my inability to make you love me. It is time for me to finish all this!”

As he uttered these words, he snatched a large pair of scissors that Charlotte had left on the chimney-piece, and struck his heart with them. Barberine rushed toward him. The blood spouted out upon his white shirt, but she succeeded in

obtaining the scissors. He sank upon the sofa, half fainting, while she, on her knees, tried to staunch the blood, all the time sobbing out broken protestations of affection, and covering his face with kisses. The moon was the only light in the room. When she was convinced, however, that the wound was a mere trifle, and it had stopped bleeding, she seated herself at his side. He, however, as if he felt unworthy of such goodness, flung himself at her feet. He embraced her knees, and implored pardon for having so terrified her, and asked if he should leave her. Amid all his agitation, he was able to watch Barberine most carefully. He excused himself, and swore before high Heaven that he wished to consecrate his life to her, but pretended that he in return would ask only for her forgiveness. And she, breathless and weeping, allowed him to talk without interruption. Once she put her arms around his neck, and he held her close to his heart, and then pressed his lips upon her brow. The scoundrel's kiss reddened the skin like a hot iron. She turned away, but she was conquered. A half hour later, they were seated side by side, but they were not talking. Barberine's head was on his shoulder, and a long, shivering sigh occasionally broke the silence of the room. The moon had gone down behind a high roof. The roar of the carriages came up from the boulevard. Suddenly the door-bell rang violently, and Barberine started up.

Saint Bertrand tried to hold her, but he could not; she seemed greatly excited.

"Who is that, at this hour?" asked Saint Bertrand.

"I am sure I can not tell," she replied.

She knew, nevertheless, that it could only be Gaskell. Probably the Comte de Perche was with him, and she was startled and ashamed.

"You must conceal yourself in my chamber," she exclaimed.

But Saint Bertrand did not intend that the vantage ground he had won, should be cut away from under his feet.

"By no means!" he said, and while Charlotte went to open the door, he calmly stretched himself out on the sofa, as if he had been at home.

CHAPTER VI.

TRIUMPH.

It was indeed Gaskell who had arrived at this extremely malapropos moment. At first he did not see Saint Bertrand, but the Vicomte, who had anticipated the coming of a rival, could not contain his joy when he saw this elderly and most inoffensive person. He rose from the sofa and advanced to meet him with unabashed ease.

Gaskell blinked as if he beheld a phantom rise from the earth. Saint Bertrand gave him no time to speak, so eager was his greeting of the impresario.

"Do you not recognize me, my dear Gaskell?" he cried. "And yet it is really I! You have returned from America, I see, and I am delighted to shake hands with you again. I, too, have been traveling. I have spent a year in Italy, a country with which you are, I believe, perfectly familiar. I have come back a changed man, cured of all my nonsense, and fully conscious of the wrongs I have committed against our dear Barberine; I have only one wish now, and that is to make her forget them. She has agreed to forgive, for she is goodness itself; but whether I shall ever forgive myself is another

thing, I assure you. But you are looking wonderfully well, my dear Gaskell! Time has treated you in the most friendly way—I, however, have aged considerably. Now, I trust that you intend to settle down, and we three will enjoy many happy days together.”

The impressario, bewildered by this torrent of words, stammered forth some vague reply, and looked helplessly about the room. He had always been more or less impressed by the Vicomte, and he was, moreover, somewhat disturbed in his conscience, as he was aware of several fabulous statements he had made. He, however, did his best to look at ease, and returned the Vicomte’s cordial greeting with respect and even deference.

“I did not expect”—he began.

“To see me here!” interrupted Saint Bertrand. “Nor did I expect to be here; but I am none the less glad to see you.”

Notwithstanding her affection for Gaskell, Barberine felt somewhat bitterly toward him, for the falsehoods he had told her in regard to Saint Bertrand. She did not choose to be managed like a refractory child, nor yet deceived. She felt a mischievous desire to augment the uneasiness of the impressario, which she at once detected.

“You see,” she said, “your information is not always to be relied upon!”

Saint Bertrand pricked up his ears.

“Would you believe,” continued Barberine, blind to Gaskell’s entreating looks, “that the report

had been in circulation in Paris, that you have married an elderly widow of enormous wealth?"

Saint Bertrand laughed.

"And thus is history written!" he cried. "Was it M. Gaskell who brought you the information?"

The impressario made a feeble attempt to defend himself, but his failure was so lamentable that Barberine took pity upon him. She rose, and wishing to ask his pardon for her little revenge, kissed him gaily on his forehead.

Meanwhile Saint Bertrand took the floor.

"No, no," he said. "Millions could have no temptations for me, now-a-days. Not that I have any objection to the institution, but when men like myself have reached the age of thirty, and have learned for themselves the reality of life, I think they can not do a worse thing than marry. To consecrate one's whole life to the happiness of a woman is a beautiful thing, after all. Unfortunately—"

Gaskell seemed determined to play into the hands of his adversary, and seeing Saint Bertrand hesitate, he said:

"Go on, I beg of you!"

"I intended to say, simply, that unfortunately the only woman whom I wish to marry, in all probability would never condescend to accept me, and she would be wise in her refusal; do you not think so, Barberine?"

Barberine colored deeply.

"Why would she refuse you?" she asked.

"Because—" The Vicomte hesitated, and

Gaskell, somewhat puzzled, looked from one to the other.

"Do pray go on!" he exclaimed, smilingly addressing the astute Vicomte. "I should very much like to know for what reason."

"Because, dear M. Gaskell, I am far from being a good match. Because, rich as I was once, I am now ruined and penniless. You are astonished, I see, and yet I am speaking the precise truth. A woman, when she marries, naturally wishes to find support and assistance in her husband. But I should be, to some extent, a burthen upon my wife, and consequently have relinquished all idea of marriage."

"Why do you speak so ill of women?" asked Barberine.

Saint Bertrand gave her an expressive glance.

"I do not speak ill of women, my dear child. But women are much like men, and both take the paths to which their interests guide them."

"No, I think you are mistaken," Barberine answered.

Gaskell followed this discussion, at a loss to understand its meaning.

Barberine continued. "Women," she said, "or most women, at least, are not influenced by policy, and do not consult their interests."

"What do they consult, then?" asked her lover.

"Can you ask? I thought I had shown you this very evening."

"Their hearts!" cried Gaskell at the same moment. "Women consult their hearts."

Saint Bertrand had risen from his chair; he was very pale. He knew very well that his future depended on the next few moments. His decision was quickly made. He dropped on one knee before Barberine, and in a voice which he sought to make as tender as possible, said:

"Barberine, I love you as I never loved any other woman. I swear, in the presence of this excellent man who loves you like a father, that I will ever be faithful to you. Will you be my wife?"

Gaskell at last realized the drama that was being enacted before him, and sat stiff and erect upon his chair.

Barberine, with tears in her eyes, looked at her lover. At this moment she had no thought of self. She said in her heart that without her, he was penniless, and she felt the proud satisfaction of sacrificing herself for him, if she granted his request. And this it was that decided her.

"Did you reflect well before you came to this decision?"

"Yes."

"And you will never regret it?"

"Never."

"And you will never make me repent having given my consent?"

"No, never."

She hesitated, her voice softened.

"You will be good to me?" she murmured, "I only ask you to love me."

Saint Bertrand extended his arms.

"One moment!" cried Gaskell, "do not be so hasty; you will both regret it later. Pardon me, Monsieur Saint Bertrand, but I should like to say a word or two to Barberine in private.

He drew the *danseuse* aside.

"Dear child," he said, "have you no common sense? Can you prefer this young man who is handsome, I admit, but who ruined, deceived and deserted you; who has not a penny, and enjoys a villainous reputation; can you prefer him, I ask, to the Comte de Perche, who is rich, amiable, and honorable; whose good qualities you know? It is utter madness; worse than that—it is suicide."

"Do you think I do not know that?" she asked, with some bitterness in her voice.

"Then why—"

"Because I can't help it," she replied, interrupting him. "He is so unhappy."

"What a reason!"

"I have none better to offer."

"I implore you to think a little; rely on my experience; do not rush to your own ruin."

"What will he do if I do not marry him?"

"Any thing he chooses."

"And what will become of me?"

"Of you? You will make the Comte de Perche happy. You will be a Countess, rich and honored, and will be received in the best Parisian circles."

She looked back toward Saint Bertrand, and met his supplicating eyes.

"I am grateful to you for your advice," she said, "but Heaven only knows what will become of him without me. He needs a controlling influence, and were I to abandon him now, I should reproach myself as strongly as if I had committed a crime."

"My poor child! You love him still!"

"Alas! can you not understand? I know all that he is; all that he is capable of; but I have always loved him; I shall always love him."

Gaskell shook his head and looked away, sad at heart. "That she should have preferred him to me, is not strange; but that she should throw the Comte de Perche over for his sake is something marvelous!" he said to himself.

The next day Saint Bertrand's return was known at the opera, and it was also rumored that Barberine and he were to be married at once. The tale was carried there by a pretty *coryphee* named Zélie, whom the Vicomte had met on the street that morning, and when Zélie went to rehearsal in the afternoon she regaled thirty girls with it—thirty girls in short petticoats, who were pirouetting, wheeling on one foot, curving their arms, and going through with many other exercises. The daylight streamed in through the high windows; innumerable mirrors reflected the girls, and a dozen or more young men in their shirt-sleeves. Zélie was late, for the lesson had begun. The ballet master, a German, who took his profession *au sérieux*, Sulser

by name, had arranged all the girls in three lines, and was drilling them with the air of an officer drilling his regiment; a musician leaning against the chimney was playing an air on the violin; every moment or two called on to repeat a phrase, the ballet-master was in a most detestable humor.

"You will be fined, Mademoiselle," he called out to Zélie, as she entered. "Now go to your place. Begin again, all of you."

He clapped his hands — one! two! three! four! five! together! And the women all passed into a straight line, and the floor shook as if a flock of sheep had rushed across it.

Meanwhile, Zélie's tongue was wagging furiously. She could not wait until the lesson was over to tell her news. As she made her pirouette, she said over her left shoulder to Stella: "I have heard something to-day."

"And what may that be?" asked Stella, as she leaped three feet into the air.

"Guess."

"No, I won't! I hate to guess."

"No chattering!" shouted the ballet-master.

"One! two! all together!"

"Monsieur de Saint Bertrand has come to the surface again," whispered Zélie.

"Impossible!" said Stella. "And how is he?"

"Well enough, I suppose."

"Two! three! four! What the deuce is the matter with you all to-day?" howled the ballet-master.

The women leaped obediently.

"And I know something else," Zélie added.
"He is to be married."

"Married! Saint Bertrand, married! How ridiculous!"

"It is so, nevertheless."

"And who may the happy woman be?"

"Some body you know."

At this, Stella was thrown off her balance, and came down with her full weight on her neighbor's foot, whereat the neighbor naturally waxed exceeding wroth, and the lesson was interrupted. The women all panted like fish just hooked and tossed upon the turf. Their hands trembled, and their very necks were scarlet. The ballet-master swore like a pirate, and stamped and kicked.

"It was all Zélie's fault!" piped a voice.

"Hold your tongue," cried Stella. "If you only knew what she has just said! you would all give your ears to hear. 'Some one among us is to be married!'"

The girls gathered about Zélie.

"Who is it? Who is it?" they cried.

The word *marriage* bewildered them.

Zélie assumed an air of importance.

"In the first place, the bridegroom is the Vicomte de Saint Bertrand."

"Good Heavens!" the women exclaimed, and then, under their breath, they added: "He is a handsome fellow."

"Who is he to marry?" was the next question.

"As you will never guess," said Zélie, "I will tell you. He is to marry Barberine."

Utter silence followed these words. The girls all looked at each other. Each instantaneously leaped to a conclusion, and tried to find out what her companion thought.

"Barberine! and what is her salary?" said the youngest girl in the room.

The lesson was resumed, but the master, Sulser, was in despair, for when had his pupils danced so ill? They were sulky, and declared that their feet hurt them.

Finally they went away by fours and threes. They were now quite ready to discuss the marriage openly.

"He is a man of the world," said Zélie, "and I should like that."

"Nonsense!" answered Stella, "what does that matter? As for me, I believe that it is in a spirit of pure calculation that the Vicomte marries Barberine."

"You think, then —"

"I think," interrupted Stella, "that Barberine's best days are over."

"Poor thing!"

"'Poor thing,' you may well say, for Saint Bertrand will dance her into her grave!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE EXPLANATION.

It was not long before Saint Bertrand discovered that a plot had been formed at the opera, to postpone, if not to frustrate his marriage. The first time that he, after a year's absence, set foot within the *coulisses*, his instinct told him this. All the women, instead of their usual bows and smiles, turned their heads away, or dropped their eyes. The men, even his old friends, held themselves aloof. When he entered the *foyer*, all conversation was suspended. Every body watched him from out the corners of their eyes, while pretending all the time to be unaware of his presence. Barberine was in a corner, practicing a difficult step. Occasionally, some one of her companions approached her, and said a few words in so constrained and even melancholy a tone, that any one would have supposed that some great misfortune had overwhelmed her. Barberine's heart was very sore, but Saint Bertrand encouraged her.

"It seems that your amiable companions and my most excellent friends, do not approve of our marriage. It wounds them, apparently, to see two persons happy. But I intend to cure them of their

wish to put you on the stool of repentance. In an hour you will have them all at your feet." And, looking around to select a victim worthy of his ire, his eyes fell on Stella. He went directly toward her, and looking her full in the face, as she stood surrounded by several gay youths, he said slowly :

"I wish to speak to you."

She meekly obeyed his imperative tones, and withdrew a little.

"Mademoiselle," said Saint Bertrand, "let me give you a little advice. It is never wise to make an enemy of a man like myself. I was never known to forgive an injury. If you are not careful, it may be that you will lose your position at this theater, and reasons for your dismissal may be given, which will prevent you from ever obtaining another engagement in Paris. You have a sharp tongue, but mine is sharper by far. I give you fair warning!"

He looked at her as he spoke, and the expression of his face was not very agreeable. Stella turned pale under her powder; then, with a shudder, moved away. Saint Bertrand then took his friends in hand. The first whom he addressed was La Gruelle, who, as he was bending over a new beauty, pretended not to see him.

"Oh! La Gruelle," said Saint Bertrand, in most audible tones, "you do not know me, I see! I have just come from a part of the country, where I have heard much of your father and of yourself. I never knew until recently, that your excellent progenitor was once a peddler. The porter of the hotel

where I lodged, at Milan, hearing me one day accidentally pronounce your name, told me that he had been the intimate friend of your family, and that when you were a child, you were in the habit of tapping at his door to tease him. Upon my word, La Gruelle, I did not know that you were any thing of a tease. I suppose, however, you have by this time conquered that fault."

Now, there was nothing that could have been said so humiliating to La Gruelle, as these allusions to his family. His vanity was cut to the quick at the least word which could recall his low origin. Saint Bertrand's manner terrified him; his air was so aggressive that his friend was quite sure something worse would follow; he therefore pounced on the Vicomte's hand, and shook it warmly, while with supplicating eyes he exclaimed:

"Upon my word, I did not recognize you. You are very much changed. I hear you are to be married! Mademoiselle Barberine should be very grateful for the honor you do her."

"I am the grateful one, and it is she who does me the honor. Go and congratulate her, my dear fellow, and don't put on these preposterous airs with me."

While La Gruelle, boiling over with rage, overwhelmed Barberine with felicitations, Saint Bertrand caught sight of Rogatchef, who, thanks to his short, slender figure, had contrived to conceal himself among the women. He went up to him, and touched his arm.

"Two words, Prince." And he pushed him gently toward the corridor.

When they were out of ear-shot he said :

"I owe you, Prince, one hundred thousand francs ; but you owe me a life. Take care that I do not take yours. I do not like people to talk about me or my acts. I do not choose them to speak with disapprobation of any thing I may see fit to do. I on one occasion saved your life, and therefore you should at least hold your tongue when I am attacked in your presence. Go to Barberine, sir, and beg her to obtain my forgiveness for you."

Rogatchef would gladly have given half his fortune if the earth would have opened and swallowed him, but Saint Bertrand would not hear a word.

"Enough !" he said, majestically.

The ballet dancer was now surrounded, and Rogatchef was obliged to wait a while before he could get near her, and almost immediately the ballet began.

The men standing about, were none of them cowards, and would not have shrunk from a duel, but almost without exception, they had in their histories something ridiculous or disagreeable, which they wished to hide. They knew that, as La Gruelle said, the Vicomte had a terrible tongue ; and, after all, what had they against him ? What did they know about him ? He had lived by his wits, certainly, and had often forgotten to pay his debts, but that was not an unheard-of crime. Then, too,

he was about to marry a *danseuse*, but Barberine was no common ballet dancer; every body regarded her as a most promising *artiste*; and where was the harm? They would have preferred to avoid the Vicomte for they neither respected nor liked him, but what were they to do? Every body was discontented, and at the same time disposed to be governed by circumstances.

He greeted them all in succession, as if he had parted from them twenty-four hours previous; he extended his hand, and no one ventured to reject it.

During the first act of the ballet, he said several good things, which broke the ice. They all laughed, and one young man said:

“I hear you are to be married?”

“Alas! yes,” he answered.

He assumed a martyr-like air as more appropriate under the circumstances, and every body laughed again. During the *entr’acte*, from his ambuscade behind a door, he saw all his friends go up to Barberine. This battle was won, and his marriage accepted.

There was but one man who continued to hold himself aloof from the Vicomte, and that man was the Comte de Perche. Gaskell had not been courageous enough to tell him of Barberine’s approaching marriage, which he had learned at the theater from the lips of Monsieur Lorrieux. The Comte stood as if struck by lightning, and then, without uttering one word of reply, went toward the *foyer*, not with

the intention of addressing one word of reproach to Barberine, but he wished to see her. The *danseuse* perceived him instantly, but as he did not approach her, dared not bow to him. After a few moments her conscience told her that she owed him, at least, a few words of explanation. When he saw her approaching, the Comte wheeled sharply about and left the theater. Barberine was greatly troubled, and determined that she would see him the next day.

The following noon, therefore, instead of going to her lesson, she took a carriage and drove to the residence of the Comte de Perche. The young man was alone. His servant said that a lady who did not wish to send up her name, had asked to see him. He ordered her to be shown up. Barberine appeared. At first he did not recognize her, so heavy was her veil, but as she threw it back with both hands, the Comte said, in a low voice:

“Barberine!”

She was greatly agitated. Extending her hand, she asked:

“Why do you avoid me? I have come to reveal to you the motives of my conduct.”

The Comte was annoyed.

“You owe me no explanation.”

“Yes,” said Barberine, as she seated herself; “yes, I owe you an explanation, and I owe it to myself, that I shall leave no means untried to retain your esteem and regard. I know you love me. The last time I saw you, impelled by gratitude, and misinformed, as you are aware, in regard to the acts and

sentiments of Monsieur de Saint Bertrand, I gave you more encouragement than ever before. But if you will carefully question your memory, you will see that I have never deceived you in any way. I have always said that I still worshiped my first lover. When I heard that he was to be married, I tried to forget him. But chance has reunited us; he loves me. He is repentant and very unhappy. He it is, who wishes to repair his wrongs towards me. Ought I to reject him? And why should your friendship be transformed into disdain? I have been very proud of your affection."

The Comte stammered and hesitated.

"Do not question me," he said, "for I can not reply to you."

"And why? Why can we not speak frankly to each other? What has either of us to hide? I am trying to do what is right."

"You are trying!" answered the Comte. "Unquestionably you are! But he —"

"I assure you that he has reformed."

"Do such men ever reform?" asked the Comte, sadly.

"Ah! pray do not take away my courage. When I wish only to do my duty, you should aid me — that is, if you love me."

"Is not that a little hard on me, Barberine? What is it you wish?"

"I wish you to continue my friend. I wish you also to become his. I wish you to save him from himself, and elevate him in the opinion of the world,

by making an honest man of him. That is what I ask of you."

"Heavens and earth! Is it not enough that you should deprive me of all hope, and crush me to the earth; that you should come here and tell me I am nothing in your eyes; but you must also ask me to be this man's friend? Do you take me for a saint, or an idiot?"

"For neither one nor the other, but for a good, loyal, kindly nature. If you suffer now, you will be eventually consoled; for it must be, that you will find, sooner or later, a woman who is worthy of you, and who, more fortunate than I, can give you the first love of her heart."

"Look here, Barberine," said the Comte, "I can not agree with you, but—"

"You will be his friend?"

"No. How can I be, and love you?"

"When I am his wife, you will not love me," Barberine said positively.

The Comte shook his head.

Barberine rose, and went toward the door. As she opened it, she turned and looked at the Comte.

"Who would have supposed," he said sadly, "that the day would ever come when you would do me the honor to enter this room, and that I should allow you to go away in displeasure."

"Are you sorry I came?" she asked.

"No, not sorry," was his reply; "but I had indulged far different anticipations."

"Ah! how miserable I am," she exclaimed. "All the men I have known have talked to me of love, and I have cared for but one in my whole life. It is neither just nor kind to treat me as if I had committed a crime, because I am constant! Gaskell turned his back upon me three years ago, because I could only feel a filial affection for him; and now you abandon me because I look upon you only as a friend. If I follow the dictates of my heart, I should not be reproached, nor hated. I may be making a terrible mistake; but you should, in that case, pity, not blame me. You have cut me to the heart."

The Comte took her hands.

"I am the most unlucky fellow in the world, I do honestly believe," he cried.

She leaned toward him and kissed him lightly on the brow, and then ran away with a more cheerful heart, glad to have appeased him, for she was sincerely attached to him, and she understood his nature well enough to be certain, that time and reflection would, sooner or later, bring him consolation. She drew her vail closely over her face, and when she entered the carriage, pulled down the blinds. But her precautions were thrown away, for she had been watched and followed. Saint Bertrand had noticed, in the morning, that she was dressing with more care than usual. He said nothing, but followed her when she went out, and saw her enter the Hotel of the Comte de Perche.

This discovery did not shock or afflict him. The

time had long since gone by when he was moved by any thing, except his own interest. He said not a word to Barberine of having seen her, but resolved to derive some advantage from his silence. When, therefore, he met the Comte at the opera, he went boldly forward, and extended his hand. The other could not refuse this mark of esteem, which custom has rendered so common place. Saint Bertrand was by no means satisfied with this. He slipped his arm through his, and walked up and down the *foyer* with him for a half hour, and then asked the Comte if he would officiate as groomsman. Poor de Perche hesitated; but he thought of the pleasure it would give Barberine, and consented. La Gruelle was so anxious to mollify the acidity of Saint Bertrand's tongue, that he not only promptly agreed to be the second groomsman, but also asked if he were in funds, and offered him money for the *corbeille*.

Bertrand, whom poverty had rendered hard and pitiless, did not allow himself to be moved by such amiability. He had marked out a certain course, from which he did not intend to swerve. He was no more considerate of La Gruelle's feelings, than he was of others. And this man, who had so many evil acts of his own to conceal, actually had the audacity to defame all the rest of the world which trembled before him. Stella was in mortal terror whenever she saw him, and turned pale if his eyes rested upon her. Rogatchef got away from Paris as soon as possible, so intensely was he annoyed

by Saint Bertrand's sneers. La Gruelle, however, became the devoted slave of the Vicomte.

"He is an excellent fellow," he said, "and has been abominably slandered. But the world will speak well of him soon; he is to be married, and will sink into insignificance, and then people will let him alone."

There was an enormous crowd at the wedding. Saint Bertrand wished it to be as public as possible. His father suddenly appeared in Paris, believed him to be reformed, and took a great fancy to Barberine. Gaskell was silent and sad, as was Charlotte. The very best set of men were in the church. The chorus of the opera sang a mass which was talked of for weeks. Barberine, who was really religious, was much agitated during the ceremony. She distributed alms to the poor afterward, and that evening they gave a dinner at the *Trois Frères*.

Thus it was that a scoundrel, absolutely without conscience—a traitor who had trafficked in all that should have been most holy—succeeded in winning one of the best women in the world, and every body stood still and permitted it.

He was radiant as they came out of church. But his joy was short, for the next morning a letter came from Wanda.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN UNEXPECTED VISIT.

Saint Bertrand glanced at the letter handed him by Charlotte just as he left his room in the morning. He gathered from it that Wanda had not forgotten him, and hoped soon to see him.

The postscript was the most important portion of the letter.

"You will obey the one who hands you this," wrote the Countess, "without question. He has our entire confidence. Receive him like a friend."

These two lines struck terror to the soul of the Vicomte. He was convinced that Wanda's papers, which he had sold, were to be claimed by this mysterious person. What was he to do? He reflected a moment, and then called Charlotte, to ask who had brought the letter.

"A shabby looking man," she answered, contemptuously.

"Send him here," said Saint Bertrand.

The man entered the boudoir, and bowed respectfully, but coldly. The Vicomte signed to him to be seated. He was of that type familiar enough to Parisians since 1830. He was a man of fifty, bald, care-worn, aquiline nose and long gray

moustache. He was simply, almost shabbily dressed; but his air was decidedly distinguished, and elicited respect; a sadness, like that of Belisarius, overspread his countenance and dulled his voice.

"You come from Varsovie?" asked the Vicomte.

"No; I am on my way there."

"Then you can give me no news of the Countess?"

"I know only that she is well."

There was a long silence. The stranger was very grave and quiet. Saint Bertrand, tortured by his conscience, was on his guard; but did not know what to say.

The man resumed.

"That letter was given me by an Englishman who came from my country, with the request that I should place it in your hands at once. I am to take a verbal reply to her."

"Verbal!" repeated Saint Bertrand, in surprise.

"Most assuredly. I shall probably be searched on the frontier, and it is not advisable that any one should know that I have any relations with the Countess Wanda."

"Tell her," said the Vicomte, slowly, "that I have never ceased to think of her — and of her husband," he added, hastily. "You may also say that, not hearing from her for more than a year, I left Paris with the intention of going to Varsovie, but I was not allowed to cross the frontier."

"Very well, sir; I will repeat what you say."

"Say, moreover, that I should like to see her, for I have important communications to make. Ask if it will be impossible for her to come to Paris."

"And is this all?"

"Yes; I can think of nothing else."

"Then we can go on to the important part of my commission. I came for the papers which the Countess entrusted to your care."

Saint Bertrand turned very pale. "The papers?" he stammered. "What do you propose to do with them?"

"I do not wish to withdraw them from your hands; I merely desire to copy a list among them."

The Vicomte thought a moment.

"Is this list of very great importance?" he asked.

"Of the greatest. Grave events will soon take place in Poland; it is on that account I am returning; and we need a copy of this list."

"Are you at liberty to speak more openly, sir?"

"No; I can say no more," was the stranger's answer.

"And that these events should be successful it is necessary that you should have these papers?"

"Precisely."

"The deuce it is! But I have not got them."

The man looked at him as if he thought him mad.

"You haven't them?" he repeated; "and what have you done with them?"

"I have burned them."

The stranger was thunder-struck.

"Burned them! and why?" he asked.

"I was followed the day the Countess gave me the papers; I knew it the moment I left her door. Some months later, when I was away, my rooms were searched, by agents of the Russian police, I suppose. Fortunately, I had the papers with me. On my return I found that I was carefully watched. I could not leave the house without spies at my heels. I sent to Comte Wolski to beg him to take charge of the papers, for I felt they were not safe with me. I was told that the Comte was dead. Finally, I found a man whom the Countess would have trusted; he stoutly refused to accept the responsibility, and started for Varsovie to obtain instructions from the Countess; but I never saw or heard from him again. I, myself, could not enter Poland, and as I could find no place of security for the papers, I determined to burn them."

The stranger's eyes were riveted on those of the Vicomte.

"Possibly you did right," he said, slowly; "but the destruction of the papers is to be greatly regretted."

"What would you have done?" asked Saint Bertrand.

"Precisely what you did. You burned them all, then?"

"Every one."

"And you burned them yourself, with no assistance?"

"None."

"And no one knew you burned them?"

"No one."

"You are still watched, then, of course?"

Saint Bertrand colored.

"I don't know," he answered. "I have not noticed."

The stranger rose, and said, earnestly:

"It is not on my own account that I catechise you in this way. My life is involved, to be sure, but that is of little consequence, for my life belongs to God, the Father, and I consider it of no value; but the enfranchisement of my country, and the liberty of its most important citizens, are of great moment. Will you swear upon your honor that those papers have all been burned to ashes, and that no eyes rested upon them previous to their destruction?"

Saint Bertrand shivered.

"I swear it," he replied.

"That is well," said the man; "and now we are free to act."

"What do you propose to do?"

"I can not tell you. I will only say that if those papers had been stolen from you, all our plans would have been changed. We should have been compelled to fly the country. Exile, by most persons, is regarded as preferable to death."

These last words were uttered in such a tone that Saint Bertrand shivered again, and asked himself if it would not have been better had he said that those papers had been stolen from him. For, when he

uttered his falsehood, he had not realized that the frightful consequences of his action might yet be averted. He wondered if there were any way that he might retract, or, at all events, tell a portion of the truth. But he saw no path open, and when he looked up, the man had left the boudoir.

In sudden agony, Saint Bertrand flew to the ante-room; no one was there. He rushed to the staircase, looked over the railing, and called aloud; dumb silence answered him. Then he ran into the street, bare-headed, and looked up and down, but all was in vain. The passers-by gazed at him as if he were mad. He slowly mounted the stairs, shuddering from head to foot; his throat contracted, his lips were parched, and it seemed to him that his head was bound with a band of burning iron.

As he entered the boudoir, Barberine ran to meet him.

"How pale you are!" she cried.

"It is nothing. I feel strangely dizzy, that is all."

"You must lie down," she said, tenderly.

"No, it will pass over in a moment."

When he was alone he buried his head in his hands, and hot tears stood in his eyes.

"What have I done!" he murmured. "What have I done!"

After this he was never quite the same. He was nervous and irritable, and often passed entire days in moody silence. And then, all at once, he became tender and pathetic, and seemed to be asking for

pity and sympathy. But pity for what? This he told no one, not even himself.

Barberine, fancying that he was unable to shake off the memory of his recent poverty, did her best to make him forget it. Never did a woman labor harder to surround the man she loved with all that could minister to his luxurious tastes. All the annoyances, inseparable from her profession, she carefully concealed from him, and in his presence her face bore always that serene cheerfulness which suits beauty and youth so well. But his heart was eaten away by a moral cancer, and he knew no rest. The hardest trial of all was, that he was compelled to hide his secret, and could ask neither advice nor assistance from any one.

How could he ever confess what he had done? How could any one understand his conduct or excuse it? How could any one even hear his story without being filled with indignation and horror? Then, too, he lived in constant expectation of some tragedy, the result of his treason, and did not dare think of the number of his victims. His punishment had begun.

CHAPTER IX.

POOR BARBERINE!

Saint Bertrand's marriage had made a great change in his life; and the visit from Wanda's emissary transformed him into another being. Once the idlest of men, he was now the busiest. He had one fixed idea, and this idea harassed him night and day, and left him without repose.

He wished to make a fortune as quickly as possible—by fair means or by foul; his future must be secure, for he now knew only too well what poverty meant. After he had made sufficient money he intended to leave Paris, for he felt he was not safe there. He knew the nature of the Princess Méléline, to whom he had sold the papers, only too well; he knew that she was quite capable of laying them before her victims. If one of these escaped, his life was in danger. He determined, therefore, to expatriate himself, to change his name, and to disappear as soon as possible.

He counted every sou, and threw no more money away. He allowed in his house no unnecessary expenditures, and exacted the most careful accounts. His wife's talents were his only resource, and no Impressario ever worked harder, to impress the public

with a sense of their value. He made the acquaintance of the leading journalists, inspired them, and almost dictated their articles. He watched his friends at the opera, and woe betide them if they neglected to applaud Barberine! But applause was not enough. Wreaths and bouquets must be thrown, and Gaskell, Lorrieux and La Gruelle were commanded to do their duty in that respect. This good husband allowed no rival near his wife's throne, and became madly jealous if any other *danseuse*, or any cantatrice, won applause, however trifling. His hard work gained him much success, but also much hatred and ill-feeling; but, although he knew this, he did not care.

Barberine, however, came in for her share, and she felt it cruelly, and told him so. She told him that he loved her too well; that other women had merit as well as herself, and he must be content to allow the public to judge for themselves. He wanted her to make money with the greatest possible rapidity, and he took it into his head that she might dance occasionally at some of the provincial theaters. But for this, it was necessary to gain the consent of her manager, which, after considerable negotiation, was given. Barberine, however, had not strength for this constant work, which began to tell upon her. He put her on a strengthening diet, and watched her constantly, to see that she obeyed his orders. After a while she had not one moment to herself. All her time that was not taken up by sleep and representations was absorbed in her lessons and

rehearsals. Saint Bertrand wrote a ballet, which was neither good nor bad; but Barberine danced her very best the night it was brought out, and the public were pleased, while Saint Bertrand was well paid in money and fame.

The result of all this was natural. Saint Bertrand lost his individuality. Before his marriage, he was something and somebody; afterward, he was simply the husband of a celebrated woman—something equivalent to the title of the husband of the queen. Barberine in the opera world was talked of constantly; her husband was of no possible consequence. She had annihilated—suppressed him!

He was looked upon less as her husband than as her man of business. He knew this, but did not care. Still, when one night some one told him that his wife was no longer known by his name, and that he, reversing the usual order of things, went by hers, he was filled with wrath.

“There goes *Monsieur* Barberine,” snickered a scene-shifter, and the name was quickly adopted, in spite of his evident anger.

After this, he took a dislike to his wife. He could not forgive her, that he was dependent upon her. She suspected nothing of all this, and seeing him living quietly and prudently, felt that he had really reformed, and worked harder than ever to please him. She declared she was happy, and, poor child! for a brief season imagined herself to be so.

He was always gloomy. He could not forgive himself for having thrown away so much money,

and said as he passed his hand thoughtfully through his hair, that he could never get it back, for his wife could not dance forever; she was breaking down already—losing her color and her strength. He looked around, ready to grasp any and every method by which he could speculate safely.

Gaskell lent Saint Bertrand all his savings, that the Vicomte might have something to work with. But what was his work? It resembled closely that of a money-lender and usurer. The worthy Impresario was so happy that he was allowed to see Barberine as often as he pleased, that he would have given the Vicomte his very soul, had it been demanded. One thing saddened Gaskell. He was convinced that Barberine was working too hard; but as she made no complaints, the good man concluded that she had been created to dance, and that it probably did not fatigue her as it did any other woman.

Saint Bertrand watched his wife's every movement, her every thought. He went with her to the theater, and hovered near her in the *coulisses*. No man could speak to her without him at his elbow; and as he considered women more dangerous than men—always ready, as he said, to give the worst possible advice—he contrived that Barberine should quarrel with every one of her friends and companions. He was supposed to be very jealous. Gaskell said he was. His wife suspected it. But little did they comprehend him. As a woman, he cared nothing for Barberine. If he was jealous

of her, it was as the miser is jealous of his money — the peasant of his farm — or the dog of his bone!

Having discovered the affection of the Comte de Perche, he kept him a little at a distance — regarding him as a most dangerous rival. If Barberine should take it into her head some day to run away with the Comte, he himself would be left totally without resources.

But he did the greatest injustice to Barberine by dwelling for a moment on this thought. Lorrieux did not give him the smallest uneasiness, for Barberine could never love such a monster. He and the Vicomte were constantly together; but no one could understand the bond that united them. Barberine was amazed at it, but still more amazed when her husband told her one day, that Lorrieux was coming to dine with them. She objected, and he protested, but not angrily.

“Listen to me,” he said, “and be reasonable. Why should you be so cold to a man who likes us both so much?”

“This man,” answered Barberine, “likes me too well; and I am ashamed that you, knowing this, can be so intimate with him.”

“He certainly is not a lover much to be feared,” sneered Saint Bertrand. “He has the figure of a hippopotamus, and he weighs five hundred pounds, at the very least.”

“I don’t know how much he weighs, but I do know that he disgusts me, and I do not wish to see him.”

"My dear child! Do you forget his wealth? Do you forget that he has no pleasures, and that he will certainly die before long of apoplexy? Would it not be as well for us to flatter his little whims and induce him to make us his heirs? We are not rich, and in six more years you will have done with dancing."

Barberine was confounded.

"Can it be that you are in earnest?" she said. "Can you suppose that I would lend my aid to such a disgraceful enterprise?"

"Upon my word!" answered Saint Bertrand, as calmly as if he had anticipated this sudden outbreak, "will you allow me to ask what there is disgraceful in my suggestion? I might, if I pleased, ask you in return, why you believe me to be capable of proposing any conduct to you, that can be considered disgraceful? No, Barberine, we will not quarrel, but I wish you to listen to me. I expect you to treat Monsieur Lorrieux cordially, and you may well believe that, were he to forget himself in any way toward you, I should pitch him out of doors, big as he is."

"But I can not," sobbed Barberine, "I can not be civil to him, in the hope of becoming his heir. Were he to leave me his property, what would be said of me? What would be the inference?"

"You are talking like a simpleton. Have we any thing in the world?"

"We have my salary, and while that lasts we have all we want. I will work as long as I have life

and strength, and will deny myself every thing, in order to save for those days when my youth is gone. But you need expect nothing else of me, and I am astonished that you can not see the delicacy of your proposition."

"Well, we will say no more about it," her husband answered. "But sooner or later you will regret what you have said to-night."

The discussion would have ended here, if Barberine had not detected in her husband's countenance an expression of menace that aroused her indignation; and she told him distinctly, if he brought Lorréux to the house, that she would leave it. That threat was too much for Saint Bertrand, and the anger burning within him burst all bounds. His eyes flashed with hatred, as he leaped from his chair. He hardly knew what he said.

"Take care!" he cried. "I have been a good husband, but I will not put up with any insolence from you! I am the master here, and intend to be obeyed; and now that you say to me '*I will not!*' I say *you shall!* and we will see which will yield."

But Barberine, strengthened by her conscience, her duty, and by the sacrifices she had made for her husband, was outraged at his addressing her in this tone.

"You have no heart!" she exclaimed. "You are indebted to me for every thing, and you speak to me as if I were a creature you had picked up in the street."

These well-merited words brought the blood to his face, and, carried away by passion, he felled Barberine to the ground. He would very possibly have killed her, if Charlotte had not rushed into the room and caught his arm. His lips were white with foam, and he shook from head to foot. He looked at his wife's face all stained with blood, and staggered to a chair where he buried his face with a groan of horror. Charlotte placed her unfortunate mistress upon a sofa, and tried to recall her to life. The scene that followed was more abject and more revolting than the one we have described. Saint Bertrand was on his knees and tore his hair, imploring her pardon, and lavished on himself the most opprobrious epithets, saying that he wished to kill himself, and imploring Charlotte to intercede for him. The two women, appalled and stunned, could find no words with which to comfort him. Barberine finally ended by consoling him with all a woman's sublime stupidity at such times. In another hour it was she who was weeping.

The Vicomte said no more of Lorrieux, but he was with the old man as much as ever; and when, one evening, Lorrieux, seated in the *foyer* of the opera, fell heavily to the ground, it was the Vicomte who rushed forward, as if this elephant had been his father.

Dr. Tant Pis bled him, but the blood would not run. He was carried home, and rendered up his soul on his way thither—and what a soul! But there were no superb diamonds among his effects—

much as he had talked of them to Barberine — and for an excellent reason. He had entrusted them to Saint Bertrand a week previous, and that gentleman was to take the first opportunity of presenting them to his wife. Barberine never saw the diamonds!

Meanwhile the Winter was at hand. Barberine's engagement was about to expire, and the manager was trying to induce Saint Bertrand to renew it. The Vicomte hesitated and became very exacting as to terms, when all at once there was a rumor of an insurrection in Poland, and of the anxiety felt in Russia. On hearing this, Bertrand had but one idea.

"Where shall I hide?" he asked himself.

In his opinion there was but one country where he could consider himself safe from the vengeance of the Poles, whom he had sold, and that was Russia. For a long time he had wished his wife to go there, and he therefore signed for her an engagement of eighteen months with the opera at Moscow. Fifteen days after the signatures were affixed to this document, he dismissed Charlotte who, he said, would be a great nuisance in traveling, and refused to permit Gaskell to go with them. He did not return his money, but declared that it was embarked in a speculation, the results of which would not be known for some months. He obtained some additional funds from his father, on the pretense that he wished them for Barberine; and finally, with his pockets full, he went off with his wife, swearing to himself that no power on earth should ever bring him back to Paris.

CHAPTER X.

GOOD FRIDAY AT VARSOVIE.

It was on Good Friday that Saint Bertrand left Paris on his journey to Moscow, and on that same day the plot, so long in process of preparation, burst forth.

Crushed by Muscovite tyranny; having seen every stipulation of the Vienna Congress violated in succession, and their country under the most arbitrary rule, the Poles once more determined to drive out their oppressors, or die in the attempt. Nothing indicated that the people were on the eve of an Insurrection. All day long the people prayed in the churches. The night was cold, clear and still; the sky bright with stars, and the snow lay white upon the ground.

About nine o'clock the shops were closed, and the town was bathed in the pale moonlight. The streets were defined by the red lights of the lanterns, and twisted and turned like so many ribbons. All the churches blazed with lights; solemn music came from out the open doors; the crowd was greater within than at any time during the day.

There was one church distinguished from the others by its superior brilliancy. It was that of the

Bernardines, situated in the Faubourg de Cracovie; it was jammed with people. A corps of the Russian Guard were on one side of the church, under the tall green trees, and thirty feet beyond was a colossal statue of the Holy Virgin. The crowd that could not get into the church gathered here and formed an immense circle around the statue. Men and women kneeling on the snow, prayed with solemn fervor. A group of Cossacks stood listlessly looking on. A priest was a little apart on the upper steps of those on which the statue stood. He was chanting a Psalm.

The church bell rang.

Back of the church stood a large and aristocratic mansion. Both doors and windows were closed, and there was not a ray of light throughout the whole front. The owners were constantly away. The hotel was that of the Countess Wanda.

A large court-yard surrounded it all. This court-yard was shut in by a wall fifteen feet high, which on one side touched the cloister of Saint Bernardine. Within the church a strange thing was taking place. While the monks chanted the Psalms, and the faithful were apparently absorbed in prayer; and the Russian spies (of whom there were many in the temple) watched each gesture made by those in their vicinity, several men were gradually pushed on by the crowd until they reached the vicinity of the altar. There, on one side, was a door masked by a black hanging, which led to the cloister and the sacristy. Occasionally, when the crowd swayed to

and fro, a man disappeared as suddenly as if the earth opened and swallowed him. As he fell or sank upon the floor he raised this hanging a little, crept beneath it, and was seen no more. A monk stationed within silently pointed down a long corridor. Further on another monk exchanged a password, and presently the stair-case that led to the crypt of the church was reached. This crypt was the cemetery of the monks, a hundred of whom there slept their last sleep. In less than an hour fifty men thus disappeared from the church, the crowd being so great that they were missed by no one.

The crowd continued their prayers in the church and upon the sidewalk, as well as around the statue, when a man appeared on the opposite side, walking quickly toward the Hotel Wanda. This was a man of about fifty, with an air of affluence; he wore high boots, and a fur coat wrapped him from his head to his heels. This man was he who, some months before, had presented himself at the Vicomte de Saint Bertrand's to ask for the papers.

He seemed to be either impatient or anxious. When he reached the door of the hotel he stopped, and, kneeling down close to the wall, placed his hat on the snow, and began to pray. He prayed with great earnestness, with his back to the hotel, and his eyes fixed on the statue; but it seemed that he had not come there merely to implore mercy from the Virgin Mother, for, as soon as his two feet

appeared before the narrow cellar window, two hands came through that window, and stealthily gliding under this man's long coat, slipped a letter into the pocket. Then the hands were drawn back into the cellar, and the man's prayer being said, he rose.

Passing the Russian corps, he was obliged to turn a little aside, because of the crowd before the church door; he lingered among them a moment, and then went on toward the Faubourg de Praga. He passed the statue of Sigismond, bearing the cross and standing on a high marble column, then the palace with its Byzantine towers, and, all at once, disappeared in an alley on the right, and climbed the steps of a house over the door of which was an inscription, "Office of the District Police."

On the first floor he entered a room where at a desk was seated a man whose eyes were hidden by large green glasses.

"Good day, Lewinski," said that personage, looking up. "How are you? and what is going on?"

"Very little," answered Lewinski. "The people are praying, but there is an unusual crowd near the market where the people are discussing the last Imperial order which directed the transportation of twenty priests and two hundred nobles from La Podolie to Caucasus."

"What more?"

"Before the Hotel de Ville," continued Lewinski, "two men met, and passed. One said to the

other, will it be Easter?' and the other answered, 'no, not until Whit-Sunday.'

"To what did they allude?"

"To some plot, of course."

"Did you follow them?"

"I could follow only one, you know."

"And what became of the one? He went to the Eglise des Bernardines, I suppose."

Lewinski started.

"No, to Saint — Charles — Borromeo," he answered, slowly.

"Indeed! I am astonished at that," said the man with the spectacles.

"Petrow, the Countess Wanda's *maitre d' hotel*," continued Lewinski, "gave me a letter which had been entrusted to him by his mistress."

"No one saw you speaking together, I hope."

"No, indeed," answered Lewinski; and he went on to tell how the letter had been placed in his pocket, and he drew out the letter as he spoke.

After lifting the seal with a penknife which he heated in a candle, the man ran over the letter, and made a hideous face.

"The Countess writes to one of her farmers that she expects to be in Varsovie on Whit-Sunday."

"There, now, you see!" said Lewinski, with an air of satisfaction.

"But I don't understand," the other replied, impatiently. "Why this new delay? Perhaps she means Easter, however."

"That is not very probable, I am sure. One

thing is, however, very certain, which is that all our information agrees in saying that a meeting of the conspirators is held this very night in the Eglise des Bernardines, and that Easter, or the next day, has been selected by the rebels for their rising."

"You are the only one who says that the meeting is at Saint Charles Borromeo, and that the movement will not take place until Pentecost. If you are not faithful, Lewinski, you will be liable to perish by the knout."

Lewinski did not flinch, but proceeded to say that he was "faithful," and better informed than the others.

The man with the spectacles looked annoyed.

"I am convinced that there is nothing going on at the Bernardines," Lewinski reiterated. "You have a hundred spies there, and they have discovered nothing. I should think that was proof enough."

"A fine proof, indeed! Half of our spies are in the plot. We pay them, and they spy us."

At these words Lewinski started again, but so lightly that the other did not notice it.

"How can they spy you? You do not trust any one. If the Russian government had more confidence in its agents it would be better served."

"Perhaps if I were to tell you who put us on the track of this plot, you would be astonished;" and the Commissary of Police assumed a most mysterious expression.

"It was Count Wolski who told us."

This horrible lie was calculated to test Lewinski,

by slandering a dead man who, for twenty years, had repelled all the advances made by the Russian government.

Lewinski was not duped, and he instantly saw that he was still mistrusted. His countenance did not change as he said:

“So I suspected.”

The other asked a question or two, and then taking a pile of gold pieces he put them in a paper, and handing them to Lewinski, dismissed him.

But hardly had Lewinski crossed the threshold, than the Commissary rang; a man appeared; the Commissary gave a little nod toward the door, and the man went quickly down the stairs and followed Lewinski.

The spy, Lewinski, soon knew that he was in his turn spied. A step which answers to your own, in a deserted street, can not be dissimulated, even when it is on snow. But Lewinski did not turn; he walked calmly on; the wind was rising, and the light in the street lanterns was very uncertain.

When he reached the new bridge that connects the Faubourg de Cracovie with that of Praga, Lewinski stood looking sadly at the river which rolled slowly along between two banks covered with leafless poplars.

A voice behind him was mingling its sad notes with the crash of ice and the rush of the water. It was the spy singing. He sang the first verse of a patriotic Polish hymn, and was then silent. Lew-

inski's heart beat like a trip-hammer within his breast, but he did not turn. Should he reply?

The voice sang the second verse, and was then silent as before. The two men were not ten feet apart, in the center of the bridge. Lewinski walked on, but he it was who sang the third verse, which was very plaintive.

"Accursed are they!" suddenly cried the man who had followed Lewinski. The latter here turned and the two spies in the employment of Russia shook hands energetically. They were both watching the Russian government in the interest of Poland.

After having exchanged the observations they had made during the evening, they went on toward the Faubourg de Praga. Lewinski suddenly perceived that he still held the money paid to him by the Commissary of Police, and he tossed it into the river.

"Vile gold!" he cried; "I would not give it away in charity; it would do more harm than good."

"Is it for Sunday or Monday?"

"We shall know soon," answered Lewinski, as they together entered a house of poor appearance. In a few minutes they emerged again, each wearing the costume of a Russian peasant, long fur pelisse, square cap, and high boots; their faces were concealed under their full beards.

They walked with long strides across the bridge, and toward the Bernardines.

Unfortunately for them, as they left the police office they had not seen a lad half crouching behind the statue. This boy followed them, keeping in the shadow, and his bare feet making no noise. He heard them sing, he could not catch the words, but he recognized the air, and when he saw them come out from the house into which he had watched them, he knew them instantly, in spite of their disguise. Ten minutes later he watched them disappear through a door in the cloister wall. He then ran with all speed to the police office, and appeared before the Commissary with his face purple with cold, breathless, but triumphant, and without waiting to be questioned:

“As true as God is in Heaven, sir,” he cried, in Russ, “they shook hands on the bridge, and they are now inside the Bernardine cloister.”

The Commissary settled his spectacles, and looked admiringly at the youth.

“Ah, the traitors!” he muttered. Then in a reflective manner he added: “In my opinion there are no such faithful spies as children, after all!”

CHAPTER XI.

UNDERGROUND.

The concealed door through which the false spies introduced themselves into the cloister noiselessly closed behind them, and the two men entered the sacristy and descended the steps into the crypt below. A little lamp stood on a tomb and gave a faint light. Lewinski took it up, and threaded a labyrinth of galleries which led toward a trap door under which was a ladder, on the lower round of which sat a lay brother. The two conspirators climbed up this ladder, and the trap door was instantly closed. They found themselves then under the Hotel Wanda, for the cloister and the hotel communicated in this way, fifteen feet under ground.

After some minutes walking, they reached a vaulted cellar, built in a circular form, wherein fifty persons were seated. Some of these men wore the brown robes of the Bernardine monks, others the black ones of the priests; others still, the dress of civilians.

There was but one woman present. From the summit of the vault hung a lantern, throwing a full light on these uncovered heads. The air was heavy with moisture, and large drops exuded from the

walls. The assembly was very grave ; in fact, it was extremely solemn. Each spoke in turn, and in a subdued voice. Occasionally the roll of the organ from the church was heard. They caught with more distinctness, however, the hymns chanted by the crowd around the statue of the Virgin. These sad sounds were a strange accompaniment to the hum of voices.

When Lewinski and his companion appeared, the whole assemblage rose, as an evidence of respect. These two men had, in fact, accepted the most onerous and the most humiliating *rôle* of them all. It was not simply their lives that they laid down upon the altar of their country ; it was their honor as well.

They seated themselves back against the wall, as did all the others, leaving a large space in the center. Then an old man arose and came forward. He was a Priest, with a long white beard, soft blue eyes, and a sweet expression. His black gown covered his feet. He looked slowly around—slowly and longingly. He looked with affection and divine compassion on these energetic faces, most of them belonging to young men, feeling that he saw them for the last time. Then he folded his arms over his chest and said :

“ My children : we are assembled here together in the service of our country—God first, and then our country. They are usually inseparable, and at this time more so than ever, for the yoke we detest, imposed upon us by strangers, oppresses us, not

only in our liberty, our laws, and our customs, but assails our religion. There is no more security in Poland for religious faith, or for priests. Our tyrant was not satisfied in declaring, as he did in his *ukase* of 1824, that the nationality of Poland was a *non-sens*, but he went still further. He has taken our convents and changed them into prisons! He has made military quarters of our churches. Each year he has taken our children from us, to educate them in Russia, in the religion and the tongue of the Muscovites. Not long ago a mother, in her despair, strangled her boy with her own hands, preferring to kill him rather than know that he had abjured his religion. The abominable and systematic course adopted by our tyrant to annihilate the Roman Catholic faith among us, has been followed up with curious perseverance. Within ten years, two hundred religious institutions have been abolished in our own Province. All their property has been confiscated. Czenstochowa, the most revered of all spots on Polish soil, has been pillaged. A large number of ecclesiastics have endured exile, imprisonment and other degradations. Half of the churches are given over to the Greek faith, and the order has been given that, if a Greek church fall to pieces, is ruined, or burned, a Roman Catholic church shall be taken to supply its place. At last our patience has given way.

“Our Lord has said that we must render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s; but Poland does not belong to Russia, or, at all events, it belongs to them only by force of arms. Moreover, no sover-

ign is entitled to the submission of the people, unless he respects their religious belief. Very well! Our religious belief is threatened and persecuted with us. In the name of God, rise now, and defend it! It is time! The hour of your deliverance has sounded!"

The priest seated himself. A long low sigh filled the air, and with it came the chant from the church, where they were singing the *Dies Iræ*.

Comte Ladeslas, Wanda's husband, now rose. His face was frank and his voice sympathetic.

"Friends," he said, "our priest has told you of crimes committed against our religion. I shall tell you of those committed against our liberties. Every stipulation of the Vienna Congress has been deliberately broken, and we are to-day governed by the monstrous and arbitrary act, known as the *Statutes Organiques*. This act declares that Poland is part and parcel of Russia; that in future its inhabitants are to know no other nationality than that of Russia! The Polish army has ceased to exist. Its soldiers are serving in the regiments of the oppressor, and the Muscovite cockade has replaced that which Kosciuszko wore. This is not all. The king's palace has been emptied of its treasures and its historical trophies. The halls where the Diet formerly assembled has been changed into quarters for troops. Varsovie has sunk from the rank of the capital of a great kingdom, to that of a town in a Russian province.

"Its university is closed; its public library, its

laboratory and its museum, all its collections of arts and sciences have been carried to St. Petersburg; and, as if this were not enough, as if they wished to add insult to injury, they have commanded that a deputation from Poland shall wait on the Czar to 'thank him for the benefits that he has lavished upon us!' Not content with making martyrs of us, they laugh at us! The lion was on the ground, muzzled and vanquished—he could not defend himself—and they have kicked and spat upon him.

"You shudder!" and the Comte's eyes swept the room. "But this is not all. How many of you have seen your property swept away, in confiscations and fines? How many of you have spent weeks in prison? Who among us has not seen some member of his family torn from under his roof to be buried alive in Siberia and Caucasus? You all of you know how Prince Roman Sanguszko, shorn of all his greatness, was condemned to walk from Varsovie to the *Mer Glaciale*. In those lonely deserts live, if it may be called life, those who are dearest to us; they are surrounded by assassins and robbers; they are condemned to work in the mines, and are cold and hungry.

"Since 1831, several attempts have been made to regain our freedom, but we, the nation, had not yet suffered enough. The heroic citizens who sacrificed themselves for liberty were taken prisoners, and martyred. I will not dwell on scenes with which, God knows, we are all of us only too familiar. I

will only remind you of the victims who were scourged to death at the foot of Kosciusko's monument. A fort has been built with Polish money within our capital, and when the Czar came here he said to the city government: 'If you continue to cherish your dreams of a separate nationality, and lift your finger for its attainment, I will blow up the town; Varsovie will be destroyed, and it is not I, most assuredly, who will rebuild it.'

"Since then we are like negroes fearing the lash; we tremble, and dare not lift our eyes; we have no secrets even within the bosom of our families; we can not travel without permission. If we are away, we are re-called, and if we do not obey, our property is confiscated. Spies dog our footsteps and sit at our tables. Those among us who confides his hopes to a friend, lays his head on the scaffold; an inconsiderate remark, a word uttered in one's cups, a bar of metal, a ribbon, and even the emblems of mourning are used against us. What am I saying? A book, a newspaper is enough; and many a man has been torn from his home at midnight for less than that. We distrust all about us; terror has become our normal state. Relatives and friends suspect each other—the ties of affection and family are broken.

"The time has come to bring this execrable state of things to an end. What people could have borne the tortures and humiliations we have borne with more stoicism? We have reason to believe that this one final effort will be successful. For ten

years we have worked, to the end that the whole country shall rise as one man — on one day ! That day is now near. Are you all ready ? If any one of you has any good reason to offer why the day should be yet longer postponed, let him speak. The safety of our country depends upon our present decision."

The Comte ceased speaking. Each man looked at his neighbor. Lewinski at last broke the silence.

"Poland may stand against Russia alone, but if Austria and Prussia join her, what have we to rely upon ? What resources have we to depend upon ?"

"France will not allow us to be attacked by the three nations," answered the Comte.

"But France did not aid us in 1830 ?"

"She could not. She was busy quelling her own revolutions at that time."

"Who was it that uttered the phrase, 'Order reigns at Varsovie ?'"

"That phrase was intended to be a witticism. I never believed that the one who uttered it felt it or thought it. Besides, it proves nothing of the real feeling of France. It expressed the opinion of one man, not of a great nation."

Lewinski thought a moment. Then he resumed:

"Do you remember what Kosciusko said to the Polish refugees who hastened back from America to plead our cause with the Directoire ? He said this : 'I do not know why it is that, in spite of the sympathy existing between France and Poland, France al

ways deserts us in our hour of need. Louis d' Anjou and Henri III. were fatal to us. The elections of the Contè Princes and of de Longueville were not sustained by Louis XV. The Duc d' Aiguillon permitted the first dismemberment of our kingdom. In 1794, when, by our insurrection, we forced the King of Prussia to separate from the coalition against France, the Republic would not aid us, notwithstanding all our solicitations.' How, then, shall we dare trust to-day to mere vague hopes?"

"But since then," replied the Comte, "the ties between the two nations have been cemented by bands of blood. In Egypt, Italy, and San Domingo, in Spain, Russia and in Germany, everywhere that Napoleon planted the Eagle of France, the white eagle has glittered by its side. Our countrymen fell under the walls of Paris, and their last sigh was a cry of 'Vive l' Emperor!' At the Island of Elba, we it was who watched over him; we fought for him at Waterloo, and would have followed him to Saint Helena. Such services are never forgotten. France is not ungrateful. She is a generous nation. Besides, between the two people there is great similarity of tastes, of heroism, and of manners. They have common interests, also. We are called, with reason, 'the Frenchmen of the North.' Our nation, when it regains its power, will be a bulwark of safety for France. No, no, Lewinski, France will not abandon us."

"If it were one of the Bonaparte family that now reigned in France, I should not despair. But the

Orleans people will do nothing but offer us good wishes."

"What does that matter?" interrupted the Comte. "At all events, we can but hope; any thing is better than to live as we have lived and are living."

"True! but we must choose our hour. Is the nation altogether ripe? That is the point. Remember that for seventy years she has been in chains. I am ready to give my life, and so are you; but I should not wish to feel, when I was dying, that I had thrown my life away. Besides, every new failure impairs our cause."

"But you have the example of France before your eyes," answered the Comte. "Did not she, too, submit to a foreign yoke? Did not the English martyrize her, much as the Russians have us? They were two hundred years on French soil. And one fine day a woman drove them away."

"As we will drive away our tyrants!" cried Lewinski, as he rose; "and may God be with us!" he added, solemnly.

At these words every man started to his feet. The priest lifted his hands—when the tumult was appeased he said, gravely:

"Have you weighed all the consequences of what you are about to do? I bid you fight, but I wish you to fully realize the dangers you run. It is not merely the risk of death, it is exile, imprisonment, and confiscation of property."

"We know it," answered the conspirators.

"While you are fighting for the cause," continued the priest, "your châteaux will be pillaged and burned, your wives and your children will be strangled."

"We know it," they repeated.

"This is not all. You will be calumniated all through Europe by your enemies. Whatever you do will be perverted. It will be said that you are conquered when you have been victors. In this way they will hope to discourage the zeal of your friends. When you are pillaged they will call you thieves. They will treat you as if you were cowards, and stigmatise you as Communists. Do you know all this?"

"We know it," they answered.

"You must endure cold, hunger and thirst. There is not one misery with which you will not become familiar. You will be exposed to rain and snow; your equipments will be of the poorest; your arms unworthy of the name. When you are taken prisoners they will assassinate you, and no one among you will live to hand down to posterity the tale of your heroic acts."

"We know it! We know it!" they all cried, as with one voice.

"And you are determined?"

"Yes."

"Then," said the priest, "we will now receive the sacrament for the dying, for, as true as there is a God on high, we shall be the first to fall."

As he spoke he drew aside a large curtain that

concealed an altar on which had been placed a crucifix, a chalice, and two silver candelabra brought from the church. All the conspirators fell on their knees. The priest, assisted by two young men who officiated as deacons, celebrated mass. Then, taking the chalice in his hand, he distributed the consecrated elements. The Psalms chanted in the street above, around the statue of the Virgin, accompanied this religious act, to which circumstances imparted a majestic solemnity. When the ceremony was over the priest said:

"Now, my children, it is time for you to know the day which we have fixed."

"May it be soon!" they cried

"The anniversary of the Resurrection of our blessed Lord, our Savior, our Redeemer, has been chosen for the Resurrection of our beloved country!"

The priest had hardly finished this sentence, when a scream was heard, followed by the fall of some heavy body in the next cellar. Every one rushed to the door, Count Ladeslas bearing one of the candelabra from the altar. A child was found lying on the ground; he had fallen in through the narrow window that opened into the street, and, frightened out of his wits at falling, sat gazing about like an animal caught in a trap.

This child was none other than the young spy who, that same evening, had denounced Lewinski and his companion. He had been sent to watch the door through which he had seen the two men vanish, and hearing a murmur of voices in the cellar, he

leaned over to listen, and fell through the loosely fastened grating. In a moment he was in the hands of those two men, who remembered him, and compelled him to speak. When he did, he was recognized as a Russian.

"He is a spy!" was the cry. "He must die!" followed in a lower and fiercer tone.

But at these words, a woman darted forward, and thrusting them aside, as women are apt to do when men hesitate, she took the child by the hand.

The lady was the Countess Wanda.

"Fear nothing, my child!" she said, gently. Then, turning toward these anxious men, she said: "Will you begin your holy work with the murder of a child?"

"The deliverance of our country depends upon it," answered Lewinski. "His life is of little importance compared to that of these men. Let us have him; he must die, I tell you."

"He shall not speak," implored the Countess.

"Who will prevent him?"

"I will."

"And how?"

The Countess turned toward the trembling child.

"Where is your mother?" she asked.

"I have none."

"Nor a father?"

"No."

"Who takes care of you?"

"No one;" and he hid his face.

"Shall I be your mother?" the Countess asked, gently.

The child looked at her with terror. He thought she was laughing at him.

"I will be your mother," said Wanda; and leading him by the hand she left the cellar, and went up to her hotel, while the conspirators regained the church.

During all this time, the Russian police had been examining the cloister, but found nothing. Out of temper at their want of success, they kicked and struck the women who were kneeling about the statue of the Virgin Mary.

CHAPTER XII.

SIRENS.

Easter Sunday is, throughout Poland, a day of family reunions, and of great rejoicing. There are no people in the world who celebrate this solemn anniversary with so much pomp, as the Poles. Invariably after assisting at High Mass, each family assembles to participate in the feast known as the *Bénit*.

The Countess Wanda, even when she was residing in Paris, adhered to this custom. The conspiracy of which she was the moving spirit, and which was now ripe, furnished her with an additional reason for splendor in the celebrations of this year.

She invited all the friends who were aiding the plot, to come to her table, and postponed the hour of the *Bénit* until that at which she usually dined. A ball was to follow, and at midnight the signal would be given from her roof. The Countess had planned all in this way, because she could thus obtain possession of the persons of the Russian officials and dignitaries, all of whom she had invited to her ball. It seemed to her that, if these men were taken previously it would be enough to paralyze the government.

At six o'clock the doors of the hotel were thrown open and the windows blazed with lights. A table in the form of a horse-shoe had been spread in the dining-room, and glittered with silver and glass. Among other extraordinary dishes was a wild boar, roasted whole, with green branches in both ears. There were twelve pyramids made of cakes, on which stood the figures of the twelve apostles. In the center of the table, a lamb, or rather an *agnus Dei*, of the natural size, stood in a silver dish. This lamb was made of butter. All the meats were cold, and there were over a hundred persons seated. The room was lighted by lusters against the wall, the largest of which represented an immense star. In the center was the image of our Lord. At his feet was the word, full of promise to all present, "*Resurgam!*"

No Russian was invited to the *Bé nit*, and when the repast was over, the guests entered the salon in a procession. A large number of guests were already assembled, representing the aristocracy of Varsovie and its vicinity, and also the Muscovite officials and the army. The women, charming and graceful, were almost all beautiful. They were seated, and standing by them were the men. The scene was animated and gay. But more than one stealthy glance was exchanged, and more than one feminine heart fluttered with emotion in which love had no share. But no one seemed to notice this, and in vain would any one with evil intentions have sought to surprise a single word that had any connection

with political events, or with the impending catastrophe.

The Countess Wanda was especially gay. Never did any hostess seem more occupied with the enjoyment of her guests. Standing in front of a large arm-chair and near the door, she, with her white shoulders and her hair loosely drawn up on her head and fastened with diamond pins, was more dazzlingly beautiful than ever, for her brow, her eyes, and her lips were radiant with joy. She moved a step or two forward to greet each guest as he appeared, and if he were a Pole, she extended her hand and said a few words, which no one could hear, but to a looker-on they seemed some witty trifle.

"A hundred and twenty guns," was the reply of one man.

"My four sons and myself," said another.

"One hundred thousand francs. Would double that sum, if necessary!" murmured a gray moustache, as he bent over her hand.

"My two brothers and twenty men!" smiled a young girl.

"Two hundred horses!" whispered a stout Pole.

To one and all, the Countess Wanda said, "At midnight!" and her guests passed on.

When a Russian appeared, the Countess exchanged the usual civilities.

The women were not quite like themselves. They seemed to be in a state of suppressed excitement. They were very gay, and selected as their especial victims the young Polish officers in the ser-

vice of the Czar. One of the youngest women in the room was a beautiful creature by the name of Zofia, with a slender figure swaying like a reed, exquisite shoulders, with hair gathered in a knot low in her neck behind, and teeth like pearls. She was dressed in rose-colored satin, and wore clusters of white narcissus. She was extremely sarcastic and bitter. There was, at times, something almost threatening in her tone.

"You say you love me," she answered, addressing a handsome young officer, buttoned tightly into his uniform, who had been speaking to her with impressive tenderness; "but you know me too well to believe that I would marry a man who is not of my race."

"And of what race am I, pray?" asked the officer. "Was I not born at Varsovie, as well as yourself, Zofia?"

"Is that really so? I took it for granted from your uniform, that you were a Russian!"

"Do you not know that I am compelled to wear it? There is very little, if any, of the Russian in me."

"Suppose you were asked to prove that assertion?"

"I am ready to do so. Go on, and tell me what I am to do. Give your orders!"

"My orders? Oh, I have no right to give any, only—"

"Only what?" repeated the young man.

"Only if any thing should take place, an upris-

ing of the people, what would you do, shut up in the fort, as you are?"

"Do you mean that there is danger of an insurrection?" the officer asked, turning very pale.

The young girl laughed.

"How should I know? But I suppose you could answer my question."

"Can you doubt what I would do?" he asked.

"Yes, I can and do," was her reply.

"Then you do me a great injustice."

"You will be with *us*, then?" she asked.

"Yes, and march in the front rank, to the cannon's mouth."

She turned toward him with so much tenderness in her eyes, and laid her slender, quivering fingers on his arm in such a way, that his heart melted with tenderness.

The young girl's eyes filled with tears of joy at having enlisted such a recruit. One of her friends, who had just left school, a mere child of sixteen, shrugged her shoulders as she listened to another officer. Her long lashes drooped over her beautiful brown eyes, and her exquisite mouth had a pretty pout upon it. She bore the name of Lodsia, and was born at Ukraine.

"I shall never marry," she said, slowly; "or, rather, I shall never marry until the day when my country is free."

He smiled, thinking her words mere girlish badinage.

"Must I excite a revolution, then, before I can hope to marry you?" he said, gaily.

She looked him full in the face, and said, quietly:

"Yes, that is just what you must do."

He started; she glided away from his side and disappeared in the throng.

The blonde, Jadiviga, as dreamy and poetical as a Scandinavian, said, as she hung on the arm of her cavalier:

"I dreamed, the other night, that there was trouble in Varsovie; you fought, but on the good side. And afterward—"

"Afterward?" asked the young man, in astonishment.

She quoted the lines of an old song:

"We were one, heart and soul."

Ludka, the haughty daughter of a prince, did her best to carry the General in command of the citadel off his feet. The Russian was fifty years of age, but he was extremely soft-hearted.

"Answer me!" he said, imploringly.

"Yes, I will answer you, if you will come to this window at midnight."

All the belles of Varsovie, in short, did their best to keep the Russian officers at the ball as late as possible; and the sirens were so fascinating that the hours passed away unheeded.

Prince Rogatchef watched all that was going on

about him with eyes that saw every thing. This Russian Colonel, buttoned up to his chin in his uniform, with his breast covered with decorations and crosses, had a face that was startling in its severity; his teeth gleamed through his moustache as he spoke; his forehead was seamed with wrinkles; his haughty cheek and flat nose made him look like a mastiff. His foot was his great beauty; he looked down upon it, from time to time, and then returned to his examination of the crowd.

Suddenly, Wanda, who was seated near the door, rose to meet a lady who was actually weighed down by her jewels—it was the Princess Méléline.

She looked Wanda full in the face, and extended her hand. A tinge of sadness was visible in her greenish eyes.

“May you be happy this year,” she said to the Countess, embracing her according to the immemorial usage on Easter Sunday.

“The same to you, Princess,” Wanda answered.

La Méléline looked at her earnestly, and then glanced around; there was a crowd within hearing; she hesitated, and then moved on, saying half to herself:

“Later will do.”

In the meantime, Wanda had been painfully struck by this hesitation on the part of the Princess. She had no clue, however, to its meaning, as she felt the greatest possible repugnance for this woman whom she met as rarely as possible.

As the evening wore on, and the decisive hour

advanced, the poor Countess became very restless, and her strength began to desert her. She asked herself if it were possible that this last supreme effort, prepared with so many sacrifices, at such an expenditure of patient effort, would fail.

A person must have been, at least once in his life, placed in a position where every hope hung on one single circumstance, to understand the anguish which at that time wrung Wanda's heart. She continued to keep up her attentions toward her guests; she had an agreeable word for one and all, while she was suffering the severest torture. Her husband, as he passed, breathed a word or two of encouragement. Her impressionable nature, too delicate for the *rôle* that her patriotism had led her to accept, could not rise again under this last ordeal. Trembling and nervous, with a forced smile on her paling lips, she watched the clock and counted the minutes she had yet to endure.

The dancing now began, and aroused her from the torpor which was fast stealing over her. Contrary to the orders that the Countess had given, the orchestra did not play the Masourka, nor the Krakowiak, those favorite Polish dances, but the Kalo-meijka, a national dance, but a sadder one, which, under the circumstances, was both an imprudence and a protest.

It was the fair Zofia with her lover who led the long chain of dancers; both she and her partner were sad and silent; they glided over the floor with eyes cast down. Twenty couples followed them, equally

sad, and the orchestra played a melody, which breathed the most touching resignation.

The Russians looked at the Prince Rogatchef, and, following his example, seemed to see no hidden meaning in this dance; but the Poles understood, and Wanda gasped for breath, and watched the clock.

Lewinski frowned. What was the use of warning the Russians in this way.

Several quadrilles followed, after which Prince Rogatchef begged Lodsia to sing. She, eager to rival Zofia's audacity, walked to the piano. It was supposed that she would sing some air from an opera. But a shiver ran over the whole assembly when she played the prelude of a reverie, composed at the time of the conquest of Ukraine by the Muscovites, and which since then had been known as the *Chant du Vanneau*.

The girl sang the plaintive, touching words, with all her soul; tears stood in the eyes of many of the hearers, but no one ventured to applaud. Prince Rogatchef went to the piano, and pretending never to have heard the song—though it was familiar enough to him amid the accompaniment of whistling balls on the battle field—said:

“What is this strange old melody?”

“A lament of my country, sir,” Lodsia answered, and with the heroism of a woman and of a child, she added: “How do you like it?”

“You sing it wonderfully well,” was his reply.

Lewinski was disturbed by these words, for it

seemed to him that the military Governor of Varsovie should not have taken all these hints so calmly. "Had he been warned?" he asked himself.

The hands of the clock were slowly creeping round to twelve. The Poles looked at each other; Lewinski went toward the window which was to show the signal. The Russian officials were all separated from each other, and each guarded by a siren. Prince Rogatchef was in the center of the *salon*, with his back to the door, and smiling complacently down upon his feet.

It was then that the Princess Méléline rose, and crossing the grand *salon*, approached Wanda. She leaned over the Countess as if to admire an agraffe of emeralds she wore on her neck, and when she was sure that no one could hear her, she said:

"Stay by my side — your plot is discovered, and I alone can save you."

Wanda started up.

"My God!" she cried; "what are you saying?"

"Silence!" said Méléline, lifting her hand.

Wanda sank back upon her chair.

Lewinski laid his hand on the window sash.

Prince Rogatchef still looked at his boots, and the clock struck twelve.

CHAPTER XIII.

“A MAN WARNED IS AS GOOD AS TWO.”

The Chief of Police, in his disgust at his inability to discover the day fixed for the insurrection, took it into his head that he would see if he could not compel a certain elderly gentleman belonging to the *petite noblesse* to disclose the facts. This man was named Korsah—he had two handsome young sons whom he adored, and was timid by nature.

The Chief of Police sent for him on Easter eve, and received him very kindly. He told him that the Government had been informed of his imprudent conduct; that he had been watched; his name and those of his two sons had been found on the conspirator's list, and that he himself would end his days in Siberia, while his two sons would perish under the knout.

Korsah stammered forth a denial, but written proofs were laid before him, and then he was crushed to the earth and speechless. When he had reached this state he was allowed to see that he had some chance if he would consent to give to the Government some slight proof of his penitence. It was not much for which they asked. They did not wish him to reveal the names of his accomplices, al-

though they had an absolute right to compel him to do so. They knew that the plot was folly itself, but they wished to know what date had been fixed for the insurrection.

The old Pole would gladly have laid down his life — he was an honest man, and he loved his country. But the Chief of Police represented to him clearly that if he held his tongue now, both wife and children would suffer poverty and death, and he began to waver. He wept and begged that he should not be compelled to dishonor his gray hairs; but it was all in vain. The executioner gently told him that if he persisted in his culpable silence, he should be obliged to order the arrest of his two sons; that in another hour it would be too late for him to speak, for by that time *all* would be over.

Korsah shuddered at the horrible emphasis laid on the word, and finally disclosed the fact that Easter Sunday was the fatal day. This bit of intelligence gladdened the heart of the amiable Chief of Police. He pressed Korsah's hands, and telling him that he had rendered a great service to the Czar, said that the Czar was never ungrateful, and he, his wife and his sons, would pass unharmed. His wife was a most excellent woman, and the future of his two sons was now assured. Korsah, however, was not allowed to leave the Hotel de Ville; he was waited upon with care and provided with every luxury, and told, beside, that he should be liberated on Monday.

And then, as it was necessary that his wife

should receive some explanation, they bade him write to her that he had left Varsovie in the interest of "the cause," and that she must keep this fact to herself. He would be at his post on Sunday evening, without fail.

As soon as he had worked his will with Korsah, the Chief of Police hurried to Prince Rogatchef and informed him of all he had discovered. The Prince was overjoyed, for he at once saw how the fall of this conspiracy would work to his political advantage. He determined that all should be allowed to go on until the very last moment. He distrusted, and with reason, the people by whom he was surrounded, and said nothing to any one. All Sunday the crowd moved through the streets of Varsovie unhindered. Groups gathered at all the corners, and were not told to "move on;" conspirators met and priests uttered words of menace in their sermons. But when the sun went down, the troops were bidden to hold themselves in readiness. They stood armed and equipped within the citadel, but the gates were not open. All the sentinels had been doubled that morning without alarming the people, as it was a customary precaution on fête days. All the troops encamped in the neighborhood of Varsovie, had received orders to march toward the town at such hours as would bring them there at twelve o'clock. The Barriere de Belvédère was occupied by five batteries of artillery; that of Wolski by seventy-four squadrons of Uhlans; that of Jerusalem by some battalions of the Guard, and Moko-

to be by the Curassiers, while numerous bodies of Cossacks circulated outside of the walls, in order to keep communication open between the different detachments of troops. Every thing was so prepared that the town was, so to speak, sheathed in guns and bayonets; and then Prince Rogatchef put on his uniform and went to the Countess Wanda's, with his youngest and most brilliant officers.

The conspirators in the mean time had not been idle. Under the pretext of family reunions, usual at Easter, they assembled in certain houses, inhabited by the chiefs, and which were the dépôts for arms. The soldiers had sticks, axes and bars of iron; the peasants any thing that came to hand, and their scythes.

The signal was a pistol shot from the window of the Hotel Wanda. The conspirators who were waiting in the street, were to rush in and take the Russian officers prisoners, and then scatter themselves over the town. A company of two hundred men had accepted the perilous task of beating in one of the gates of the fortress. A Polish officer on guard that day had promised to aid them.

About ten o'clock, some of the conspirators who were in the streets, noticed that certain unusual precautions had been taken by the authorities. This caused them to hesitate, and observe more closely. The gates of the courtyard of the Hotel Wanda were guarded by sentinels. The patrol were doubled. Strange lights were flitting about the citadel. Those who first noticed these things

whispered them to their neighbors, and tried to give a general alarm ; but they were quickly and quietly taken prisoners. No one of them was able to enter the hotel, where their chiefs, full of confidence, were waiting for the fatal hour.

Lewinski, as the clock struck, threw open the window and fired a pocket pistol, as he had agreed to do. At this noise there was a great stir among the guests of the Countess. All the women shrank back behind the men, and the Russians, as if they had received an order, drew their swords. At the same moment, there arose a great noise from the street, and hurried footsteps were heard on the stairs. The conspirators, supposing that these steps were those of their friends, rushed to meet them, but started back aghast on beholding a band of Cossacks filing into the room.

All this occupied less than a minute ; but the courtyard, the vestibule and stair-case — in fact, the whole hotel, swarmed with soldiers.

“We are betrayed ! We are sold !” cried the conspirators ; and the most resolute among them threw themselves upon the naked swords, eager to engage in a conflict, however desperate, with their enemies.

Prince Rogatchef, standing at the open window, called to the soldiers in front of the hotel. They obeyed his summons and crowded into the house. Their wild cries mingled with the curses of the conspirators and with the sobs of the women. Suddenly a discharge of musketry was heard in the Fau-

bourg; then two cannon shot and a roar of anger and hate rose from the street below. Meanwhile, Ladeslas with Lewinski pushed the conspirators through a door which led from the dining-room to the offices, with the hope that they could get into the street through the cellar and the cloister. Unfortunately, every corner was crowded with soldiers, and they were caught like rats in a trap. Then they determined to die, and threw themselves on the first soldiers who came to arrest them, and a terrible conflict ensued within the house.

While these events were taking place in the Hotel Wanda, the whole town was all astir. Every door had been thrown open at the stroke of twelve, and the multitude poured into the streets, brandishing arms and torches. Each citizen hurried to the post that had been designated for him, and men rushed to and fro across the snow, without stopping to exchange a word.

Some women rushed toward a group of men who were standing under one of the lamps.

"Are you men?" they cried. "Go, if you are, and fight."

At the same time, soldiers poured into the town at every gate, and the citadel blazed with lights.

Very soon the cannon clattered down the streets, and presently the fusillade began. The soldiers fired hastily upon the crowd, and this went on for an hour, and when their ammunition was exhausted, the snow in the streets was black; the bodies lay upon it three feet deep.

The conflict did not last long at the Hotel Wanda. Overcome by numbers, the conspirators had been, one by one, conquered. Comte Ladeslas killed two men with his aged arm, but a third felled him to the ground. He lay there bleeding to death, on the threshold of his own house, and the combatants stepped over his body. Finally he was carried away. They wished to preserve him for further torture. When the conspirators were all killed, the bodies were piled in the vestibule, and a Cossack officer went to his General to announce that the duty for which he had been summoned, was completed.

The *salon* presented the most appalling appearance. The women were all huddled together at the further end of the room—some of them on their knees sobbing and praying, hoping to die with their husbands and brothers. Zofia's lover, seeing that all was lost, killed himself with his own sword.

Wanda sat half unconscious, looking like a mad woman struck with paralysis. La Méléline grasped her arm, and, with frowning brows, watched Prince Rogatchef, who stood before the window giving his orders. Meanwhile, the tumult in the street abated, and only an occasional shot was heard, indicating that a hidden assassination had just taken place. The soldiery now pillaged the houses, and long processions of prisoners were slowly conveyed to the citadel. There were women, children and priests—many priests, for their religion, as a natural consequence, strengthened their national sentiments. All these poor creatures were hurried on with blows, like

a flock of sheep stolen on the march, and driven by robbers who were exasperated by their slowness. Other bodies of troops had scattered in every direction to explore distant streets. Then it was that the Prince turned and saw before him the officer of the Cossack regiment. His nostrils dilated with satisfaction, and he nodded toward some of the ladies. The young officer marched toward them, and laid his hand on their uncovered shoulders. They started at this brutality, but rose without a word of protest. Cloaks belonging to the soldiers were thrown about their shoulders, and they were carried off. Others sobbed and prayed to God on their bended knees.

But when the Prince asked what had become of the Countess, there was no reply, and in fact the Countess had disappeared. Some minutes before, La Méléline, judging that the moment was propitious, led Wanda out upon the stair-case. Wanda submitted, neither knowing nor caring where she was taken, so dulled were her senses by the shock she had received. Escorted by the two policemen to whom she beckoned, the Princess could go where she pleased. The soldiers moved aside as she passed. She took two cloaks from one of the chairs, threw one about herself, and in the other wrapped the Countess, and while Rogatchef still stood by the window, she went down stairs with the intention of going out of a rear door of the palace and reaching her carriage, which awaited her with an escort.

But the Princess had not taken into considera-

tion that the body of Ladeslas lay across the threshold. When Wanda recognized the face of her dead husband, she awoke from her torpor, and rushed toward the body. It was at this moment that the officer crossed the vestibule with the women whom Rogatchef had pointed out. Wanda saw them and turned quickly toward them.

"Where are they going?" she cried. "Why am I not with them? I am the author of the conspiracy."

In vain did Méléline entreat and order her to be silent. The Countess repeated her words, and then turning to the Princess, added:

"No, I will not go with you. I shall go to the citadel with them. I am the one who is to blame, and I wish to die with my husband!"

Rogatchef appeared in the vestibule. He and La Méléline looked at each other with a certain fixed fierceness of expression. Then the Prince shook his head.

"It can not be permitted," he said slowly.

"And why? You know that this life was promised me."

"I received a contrary order from St. Petersburg, this morning."

"And from whom, pray?"

"From the Czar."

La Méléline's eyes flashed fire; then there came into them a look of dull dreariness; and at last she bowed her head and stepped aside.

The Prince gave his officers a signal; one of

them, as if impelled by the habits of good society, offered his arm to the Countess. She took it, and with quivering limbs entered a carriage with her companions, a squadron of Uhlans closed around it, and the mournful party took their way to the citadel. Two o'clock was heard striking, and a silence as of death reigned in the streets and somber fortress. Once again was Polish nationality strangled and murdered.

Order reigned in Varsovie!

CHAPTER XIV.

A CRUSHED DELUSION.

When the carriage containing the prisoners had reached the outer court-yard of the citadel, the officer in command of the squadron of Uhlans escorting them, opened the door, and the ladies stepped out upon the snow. They were at once separated. The Countess had time but for one glance up at the massive structure, when she was led away, through dark corridors, passing innumerable doors, all numbered, furnished with huge bolts and bars, and guarded by sentinels with their guns over their shoulders. Sobs and oaths, hoarse maledictions, and cries of agony were heard on all sides.

A door was at last thrown open in front of the Countess—she beheld a small room, in the center of which stood a stove. One candle lighted it faintly; a strong and disagreeable odor hung about the place. When she entered, the door was closed behind her, and she heard the bolts drawn. Presently an almost tangible silence fell upon the prison.

The Countess stood motionless a few steps from the door. What a strange transition, from her

luxurious hotel to this dismal, filthy place, and from the terrible emotions of the last two hours to this solitude! She could hardly grasp the succession of events that had brought her there. All she realized was, that her country was in chains and her husband dead. She looked around her; on one side of the room was a barred and dirty window, a straw chair in one corner, a narrow bed, and on a table stood a pitcher of water. The place was intensely hot, and gas escaped from the stove. The Countess felt faint and giddy; she threw off the cloak in which she was wrapped, and sank on her knees at the side of the bed. There, in this squalid cell, in her ball dress and jewels, she prayed long and fervently.

Fallen in one brief moment from wealth and position, she trusted in God, and asked Him to give her courage and strength. She was heard.

How long she prayed she never knew. Sleep, the sleep of utter exhaustion that follows after great tension of the nerves, overpowered her as she uttered the name of the Virgin Mother, and there, with her cheek on her folded hands, she slept like a child. At day-break she was awakened by a wild shriek. Within the fortress, or rather, in the courtyard under her window, a man was being put to the torture, and Wanda was horrified at recognizing Lewinski's voice. The poor creature was expiating his double espionage under the knout. Each blow of the lash elicited from him new imprecations. Wanda covered her ears, her very head, that she

might not hear. The executioner was humane, and Lewinski died at the thirtieth lash.

Wanda was praying for the repose of the soul of the martyr, when a woman entered her cell. This woman, or this female, rather, exercised in the prison the functions of jailor, and fulfilled her duties with cold rigidity. She was lame. She bade Wanda undress, and herself unlaced with her dirty fingers the satin dress, and took off the diamonds, and arrayed her in the prison uniform ordered for thieves and political offenders. Wanda meekly submitted without one word. What did she care now for her corporeal existence? What was this last agony, after so many others?

She was left five days in prison. She dared not undress, for the bed was so dirty. She lived on bread and water, leaving untouched on the table the other food that was placed there night and morning. She prayed all the time, and reserved her tears for the night, when she thought the guard could not hear. In her heart were so many sad memories, that she would have starved herself to death had she not known that suicide was a crime.

The sixth day she heard much movement in the corridor. Doors opened and shut; heavy steps resounded upon the floor, and the rattle of arms in the hands of the soldiery all day long.

The next day, at ten o'clock, the door of her cell was thrown wide open. The Countess was sitting on the edge of her bed, and turning, beheld a *gend'arme*, who ordered her to follow him. She rose,

without a question, and accompanied him through corridor after corridor, and then climbed twenty stairs. She found herself at the entrance of a large hall, in the center of which sat three men, before a table covered with a green cloth. These men were the members of a Court of Inquiry, convened by the Czar, to judge finally and without distinction, the abettors and instigators of this last revolt in Varsovie.

She knew them all. The military Governor, Rogatchef, in his full-dress uniform, was seated in an arm chair; at his right was the Marshal of the Province; on his left was the Chief of Police, and all three looked solemn and anxious, as was natural to men who held life and death in their hands.

The Countess courtesied profoundly. Rogatchef returned it with an inclination of the head, and pointed to a chair opposite himself, on the other side of the table. She seated herself.

Rogatchef turned over the papers upon the table; then, with an insinuating smile, which made his ferocious features more hideous than ever:

"I suppose you know," he said, "why you have been summoned here?"

"I presume I do," answered Wanda.

"Your situation is most critical. It is best that you should know this. You women have exhausted the emperor's patience with your incessant plots against his government. You have nothing to rely on now, save the clemency of your sovereign. Will you try to deserve this by a frank confession?"

"I confess all," answered Wanda.

The Governor looked astonished.

"You admit, then, that ever since your marriage, and particularly in the last ten years, your house has been, both in Paris and Varsovie, a place of refuge for all rebels who saw fit to conspire against the authority of the Czar?"

"I admit it."

"You admit having aided them with your purse to such an extent that the half of your property has been wasted in this way?"

"I admit it."

"You admit that you have kept up a correspondence with Polish refugees, exiles and criminals, who have taken refuge at various times against the justice of the Czar in foreign lands?"

"I admit it."

"You admit having maintained spies, both in Varsovie and at St. Petersburg — spies who watched and reported every movement made by the government in connection with the Poles?"

"Yes."

"You admit having sought to draw into your conspiracy the Jews of Varsovie, who had hitherto respected the power of the Czar?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever told your peasants that you would free them, if you were permitted?"

"I have, over and over again."

"Have you done your best to induce your husband to place himself at the head of all the insur-

gents of the country; and have you excited the rebellion of last Easter Sunday, thus returning the manifold goodness of your sovereign by the most frightful ingratitude?"

"Yes."

The Prince was startled at this excessive frankness. He looked at his two coadjutors, and shook his head. Then in even a more insinuating voice than before, he said almost plaintively:

"Why have you done this?"

The Countess did not seem to understand this question, direct as it was.

"Why? Did you ask why? You know why—for my country!"

This most natural reply seemed to excite the anger of the judge.

"Upon my life," he said, "I can not understand these Poles. Are not they and the Russians one nation? Have they not a common origin? You know that this is the case; and whoever seeks to rend asunder these two people, deserve to be treated as the basest criminals!"

"Originally," answered the Countess, calmly, "we Poles had no hatred for Russians. The question of a common origin is of no importance. Poland only asks to live in peace with her neighbors. But, first of all, they wish to live as they please, to have a distinct and separate government, a religion and a tongue of their own; laws of their own, and made by themselves; and also national institutions."

"I am not here to argue with you," interrupted the General. "Those are perfectly visionary ideas, which you have brought from France."

"These visionary ideas, as you call them, have, nevertheless, made France what she is—the first nation of the world!"

"Pshaw!" said the General, "you like France, then?"

"Yes, next to my own land."

"All right; we won't dispute on that score. But as I said before, your situation is very grave; but you have it in your power to ameliorate it. I do not promise you forgiveness, for that has been accorded to you too many times already; but, if you hide nothing, I promise to intercede with the Czar, to induce him to change the sentence of transportation to Siberia, to that of exile. Now answer my questions: Who were the prime movers in this last plot?"

"Those whom you arrested in my house."

"And there are none others?"

"None."

"My information, nevertheless, compels me to believe that Korsah and his sons were to have introduced a certain number of your peasants into the Faubourg de Praga; also that three Bernardine monks, who were seized with arms in their hands, were bearers of letters from you; and, finally, we have papers here which abundantly prove the adhesion given to the plot by a crowd of nobles in the largest cities of the kingdom."

The Countess, thinking that the General was merely laying a trap for her, answered :

“I know nothing of any such papers.”

“Look at them,” said the General, “and tell us if in this plot there were no other chiefs than these we have mentioned?”

Saying this, he pushed toward the Countess the papers under his hand. Wanda glanced at them indifferently. All at once she started and began to turn them over. She could no longer doubt; these papers she touched were those that she had confided to her lover, which Lewinski had told her were burned. Not one was missing. The unhappy woman had been betrayed, and in addition, to her despair, was the conviction that she had ruined all these persons who were most essential to the safety of her country—the very most important personages within the kingdom. She could not believe her eyes. She felt as if she were going mad.

“These papers, Prince, are — Where did you procure these papers?”

The Prince crushed her with a word.

“We did not procure these papers,” he said; “we bought them.”

“Bought them!” repeated the Countess, in a bewildered sort of way; “and of whom?”

“Of the man in whose hands you placed them.”

“The man!” she answered; “what man?”

“The Vicomte de Saint Bertrand, your lover,” answered Rogatchef, brutally.

Wanda could bear no more. All the blood surged from her heart. She rose as if she had been violently lifted from her chair by an invisible arm, and clasping her two hands above her head, cried aloud in her agony, "Forgive him, Father!" then sank fainting upon the floor.

The surgeon attached to the citadel was summoned. She was quickly restored to consciousness. Then she sobbed, begging God's forgiveness of her faults, and said she had been too heavily punished. She could not doubt Rogatchef's words. Why had her former lover told Lewinski that he had burned these papers, if it were not that, having sold them, he could not return them. The horror she felt momentarily extinguished her sorrow. In the meantime, a certain compassion was visible on the countenance of the Marshal.

He leaned toward Rogatchef and said a few words in a low voice. But Rogatchef shook his head, and as the Countess opened her eyes, resumed his questions.

"Do you still refuse to give the names of your accomplices?"

"I refuse to give them," answered the Countess. "Besides, these papers are all forgeries. You have fabricated them among yourselves."

"Take care, madam!" shouted the Governor, angrily. "We are not controlled as to the sentence we pass, and it depends on us alone whether you end your days in Siberia."

"I know it well," answered Wanda. "I was

born there, and married there; would to God that I may die there."

"But," replied Rogatchef, "there are other punishments more humiliating, particularly for a woman."

"Ah! You speak of the knout. I know that, too, by tradition. My mother suffered under it, as did my Savior."

Rogatchef started up.

"You are," he cried, "the most wonderful example of ingratitude that I ever saw! Your family has always conspired; you, yourself, have passed the greater part of your life in conspiracy. You have been forgiven ten times; and now that you are offered clemency once more, you answer with the most foolish bravado. You are unworthy of mercy or of justice."

Wanda interrupted him.

"If I have been forgiven," she said, "it was not from humanity. It was simply that, were I at liberty, there was more chance of laying your hand upon my accomplices."

The Prince struck his fist upon the table, but Wanda did not seem to notice it. What she had just said was really true, but he did not intend to admit it.

"We know their names now," he cried.

"Then what do you want of me?" asked Wanda.

Rogatchef choked with rage. He had gleaned nothing from the prisoner by all these questions, and

he actually did not know what to say next. The Chief of Police now came to his assistance.

"What we ask of you," he said to Wanda, "is a very small matter. In the papers lying before you there is a list in cipher which we have not been able to get at, as I am ready to admit. Read us this list, and if, as we believe, it contains the names of the conspirators, we will give you our word of honor, that we will commute the sentence of transportation which you deserve, into exile for life."

Wanda could not conceal her joy at these words. She could rescue some of the victims, then. She turned over the papers, and found the list, which comprised the names of the leading Jews in Poland, who, for the first time since the division, had joined in a conspiracy against the Czar. This was the especial meaning of the mission undertaken by Ladslas, and when Saint Bertrand announced that he had burned the list, Wanda was not able to rewrite them all. It will be remembered that Lewinski, when informed at Paris of the loss of the list, evinced the greatest possible anxiety.

The three judges watched the Countess as she ran over this list, feigning to have forgotten the key to the cipher. At last Prince Rogachef, no longer able to control himself, asked if she had decided.

"Certainly," answered Wanda.

"Well!" said the three men, simultaneously.

The Countess deliberately tore the list in two, and tossed it into the flaming stove.

"This is what I have decided!" she cried; and, as Rogatchef, carried away by his anger, advanced with a threatening air, she breathlessly exclaimed:

"You must think me cowardly and vile, to suppose that I would voluntarily betray a single one of these persons! You wish to know the members of this conspiracy? I will tell you who they are. They are the inhabitants of Poland; the men and women, old men and children, all who have intelligence to comprehend, or souls to feel—hearts to love and to hate; all these, I tell you, hate you and your government. You may decimate entire generations; you may expatriate them on every possible pretext, but so long as a voice is raised between the Vistula and the Dnieper, it will speak only to curse you, to reproach you for your broken promises, your assassinations and tyranny; and if the God who hears me condescends, for reasons He only knows, to allow Russia to reign over Poland, He will never allow the Poles to be reigned over by the Russians. You were never made to entice nations, but only to subjugate deserts."

Rogatchef would hear no more. That he, the Governor of Varsovie, should be thus braved, was absolutely incomprehensible — and by a woman, too. He rang the bell; the gend'armes opened the door. "Take her away!" he cried.

The next day Wanda was brought back to the same audience chamber. She thought, at first, that she was to be again questioned; but the additional solemnity of the judges showed her, presently, that

something extraordinary was about to take place. Prince Rogatchef rose, and read the sentence. The Countess Wanda was degraded from her nobility, her property was confiscated, and she was condemned to Siberia.

After having read this sentence, she was led back to her cell.

The next morning, at day-break, her door opened, and she was taken down to the court-yard, where a sledge was in waiting with an escort. She took her seat between two gend'armes, the doors of the fortress were opened for the sledge; the fresh, sharp air cut Wanda's face, and the stars still glistened in the sky. She passed her hotel, deserted and closed; then, one by one, the last houses of the city, until finally, boundless plains of snow stretched before her.

CHAPTER XV.

THE OSTROG.

While these events were taking place in Varsovie, the Vicomte de Saint Bertrand had left Paris with Barberine, and was on his way to Vienna. At this epoch, 1844, traveling, particularly in Winter, was not as easy a thing as it is to-day. Saint Bertrand was twelve days in reaching the capital of Austria. From that point there were two ways of going to Moscow; one, the most frequented, went through Cracovie and Varsovie; the second, much longer and more fatiguing, was to follow the Danube to its mouth, and crossing the Black Sea to Odessa, finally traverse the Province of Kherson, at last reaching the center of the Empire.

No traveler, unless absolutely compelled by business, would ever dream of taking this last route. Nevertheless, it was the one selected by Saint Bertrand, who had especial reasons for not wishing to show himself in Poland. On his arrival in Vienna he heard of the indiscretion at Varsovie, and he felt that it was imperative that he should avoid the most direct route. After twelve hours of repose, he embarked, therefore, upon the Danube, and, at Galatz, took the steamer across the Black Sea. When he

reached Odessa he allowed his wife a couple of days to rest, for she had been much exhausted by sea-sickness; but at last they were comfortably established in a covered sledge, which was to take them, within a fortnight, to Moscow. They had been thirteen days on their way; their sledge, drawn by three horses, glided over the shining, polished snow. They had passed through interminable forests, over frozen lakes, and barren deserts. Barberine had received in Paris, from the general superintendent of the theaters in Russia, a *carte de circulation*, and consequently they experienced no delays, finding horses awaiting them at every station, where her husband, as well as herself, were treated with the most obsequious attention.

On the thirteenth day, nevertheless, their patience was severely tried, for there were no horses at the station. They had all been taken for the service of the government. The master of the post station said he regretted it exceedingly, but he saw no way of their going on before night.

Barberine was very tired, and determined to take advantage of these few hours to rest. She asked for a bed, and threw herself upon it without undressing, and at once fell asleep. Her husband, however, was too much out of temper at this forced delay to do the same, and after drinking half a dozen cups of tea, he put on his pelisse, and escaped from the heated atmosphere.

He stood for some time on the platform by the door. The town of Zaráïsk, with the domes of its

churches, its houses half buried in the snow, and the images of saints above their doors, was spread out at his right. It was a dull, silent little town, with scarcely a human being in the streets. The post station itself was made of pine logs, and had but two windows, with a long shed on one side, which was the stable. Shade trees stood in clumps, shivering in the sharp wind, and from a post hung an extinguished lantern.

At the side of the station, among piles of wood and bark, was Saint Bertrand's sledge. The top was drawn as far front as possible, a thick cover was hung in front of the opening, and the handsome vehicle, amid all these surroundings, looked almost squalid. Near the station was a strange looking building of stone. This house stood without the village, and did not appear to belong to it. The presence of a sentinel pacing up and down in front of its door indicated that the place was a prison, which it was, but of a peculiar kind, as its prisoners were transitory, it being intended to shelter, for a night only, those who were on their way to Siberia.

Near each station in Russia stand similar buildings. They are called *Ostrogs*, and tears enough have been shed under their roofs in the last hundred years to submerge them.

It was at Zaráisk that the road from Varsovie leading to Siberia crosses the other. These two dark roads looked like an enormous crucifix laid upon the white snow, stretching as far as the eye could see.

And on this silent and deserted plain appeared neither tree nor shrub — nor a house, nor a stone! The white winding sheet veiled all, and above hung a low, gray sky, of one uniform tint, the color of steel. Night came on, and the wind went down. The cold grew more intense. The town of Zaráïsk seemed to be deserted, and with the exception of the sentinel in front of the Ostrog, not a living soul was in sight.

Saint Bertrand walked a little way down the road, to stretch his limbs. Of what was he thinking? Probably of nothing except of the annoyance of waiting. The snow creaked under his tread, his fur collar was drawn up to his ears, and his hands were buried in his pockets.

But all at once he beheld, afar off on the white snow, a black spot, which gradually approached. Presently he saw that it was a long caravan, a number of men on horseback, and more on foot. He began to hear the steady tramp of the horses on the hard snow, and also a low murmur of voices. Saint Bertrand saw that the men on foot were in long files, with horsemen before and behind, while other horsemen were scattered along on either side. A large, low sledge, was in the center of this procession, and another drew up the rear, escorted by six horsemen. .

All this looked small and uninteresting at a distance, but as the caravan approached it seemed to fill up the whole space. Saint Bertrand began mechanically to count the men. There were an hun-

dred and fifty on foot, and as many more on horseback. He heard them singing, and their voices mingled with the rattle of chains.

When they came yet nearer, Saint Bertrand saw that the horsemen were Cossacks. Each of them wore a shako of varnished leather, with the strap buckled under the chin, and a silver belt drawn tightly around the waist; mantles floated from their shoulders, and their lances caught the light. The men on foot were dressed alike, in gray cloth coats with hoods. They were in squads of twenty, ten attached to the other ten, and to a long bar of iron by the wrist. Some had rings on their feet, and dragged after them, through the snow, a rusty chain. These men resembled a herd of cattle rather than the God in whose Image they were made.

A woman was in the first sledge, and some men who were sick, in the second. These poor creatures were the youngest of those who had taken part in the recent insurrection at Varsovie; students, workmen and peasants. Some among them were not yet eighteen. Two priests, half dead with the cold and their privations, were in the last sledge. The one woman was the Countess Wanda.

Two days before she had implored the soldiers to place her in a hospital. She was ill and worn out by the journey. But there was no hospital on this road, or at least there was none for another two hundred leagues. Wanda had been compelled, therefore, to bear the fatigue and the cold. The guard, out of pity, insisted that her sledge should move at

the same pace as the band of transports which they met at Reazan. The Cossack officer ventured on this infraction of orders, and even gave his fur pelisse to the Countess. This officer had known the Countess well, and had often dined with her at Varsovie.

Meanwhile the caravan approached the Ostrog, where they were to pass the night, in front of which stood the Vicomte de Saint Bertrand. The singing he had heard was the Lament of Ukraine, sung by the Cossacks. These savage children of the Steppes thus beguiled the monotony of their journey, and the prisoners, with their hands fastened to the iron bar, listened with full hearts to these plaintive strains.

There was one song at which they started. It was that which celebrated the triumph of the Russians over Napoleon in 1812—a triumph which was as much over Poland as over France.

At first the prisoners said nothing; but they were seen to start and lift their heads. They exchanged glances. Their nostrils dilated as if to drink in the smell of powder on the battle-field, and the eyes of the younger men flashed fire.

They allowed the Cossacks to finish their insulting song, which had four verses. They marked the time with their feet, and when it was finished, the prisoners looked at each other, and then all at once, with one voice, and as if the time had been measured, they burst out in a hymn in their turn. They had learned it at their mother's knee when they

could not speak distinctly. This hymn was known throughout the length and breadth of Poland.

“Non! la Pologne n'est pas morte
Tant-que nous vivons sous le ciel.
La liberté que la force nous a prise
Avec la sabre nous la reprendrons.”

They stopped to breathe, but the savages who guarded them did not allow them to continue. They spurred on their horses, and beat the unhappy prisoners over the head and shoulders with sticks and whips—the Cossacks shouting, and the silent heroes making no resistance as the blows fell like rain.

Their haughty souls were not, however, vanquished. When tired of showering their blows upon them, the Cossacks fell back, and the order of the chain was reëstablished. Then the prisoners, with their brows marked by the lash, looked at each other again, and as before, they burst out together with the next verse:

“Nous passerons la Vistule, nous franchirons la Warta;
Nous sommes les Polonais!
Bonaparte nous apprendra
Comment il faut s'y prendre pour vaincre.”

But they could not finish. The Cossacks threw themselves more fiercely upon them than they had previously done. They used their lances, pricking the prisoners on the brow. The horses reared and plunged.

Wanda, exhausted, almost dying as she was,

lifted herself in the sledge, and looked upon them. The priests sang with the young men, and Saint Bertrand looked on without in the least comprehending the scene.

Meanwhile the caravan stopped at the Ostrog. Some women and children came out of the village, and brought the prisoners food and tobacco. They were saddened by the dreary sight, and regretted that they could do so little.

Again did the prisoners sing another verse, and the Cossacks, utterly furious, threw them to the ground in a heap. The horses reared and plunged, but the chorus ascended still from some stout hearts. Then there were groans and cries of "Glory to God!"

Wanda, in her terror, threw herself from the sledge, and the horses trampled her under their feet. When the young officer dragged her away, a voice said aloud:

"She is dead!"

At these words the door of the Ostrog was thrown open, the fighting ceased, and the Countess was carried into the prison. There she faintly asked to be laid upon the ground. The prisoners were all now profoundly silent. The officer, on his knees at her side, tried to make her take a few drops of brandy. She panted for breath. As she opened her eyes, they fell on the doorway which was crowded with the peasants from Zaráïsk, and among these people she saw a face she knew. It was horribly pale and convulsed. It was that of Saint Bertrand. They

recognized each other at the same moment. He, moved by an imperious feeling of pity, hurried toward her, but she threw herself back. All the prisoners were looking on. Then gathering all her remaining strength, the Countess raised her arm, and in a clear ringing voice, addressing her compatriots, she said:

“Do you see this man? He is the one who sold you!”

Every one retreated. The Vicomte stood in the center of a vacant space. Three hundred curious eyes were riveted upon him. The Cossacks turned away in contempt, for even executioners despise traitors. He stood as if nailed to the ground, watching Wanda with haggard eyes as she breathed her last. Then the villagers were sent away, and the door closed. Before this was done, one of the prisoners had succeeded in making his escape. He was a young peasant, by the name of Eytmin, who had not been fastened to the chain, but marched alone with fetters on his ankles and wrists. When he saw the Countess point out the man who had sold his countrymen, he examined Saint Bertrand attentively, and then while they were carrying Wanda's body into a room in the rear, he crept under the belly of a horse, and got into the rear of the villagers, and finally behind the high piles of wood. Profiting by the darkness and confusion, he threw himself into Saint Bertrand's sledge, which he discovered, and dropped the covering again.

CHAPTER XVI.

RETRIBUTION.

Eytmin was the son of Wanda's nurse. Up to Easter Sunday, he had lived with his old mother on one of the estates belonging to the Countess. He acted as Forest Guard, fulfilling his duties with fidelity and judgment. This simple and pious young man had but one thought in his soul — that of the enfranchisement of his country. He had participated in this last effort. Wounded by a bayonet, he was dragged to prison, and a week later was sentenced to Siberia. I have said that Eytmin was pious. He quietly resigned himself to his fate; and yet, in addition to his sorrow at his loss of liberty, he had an especial reason for suffering in the exile to which he was condemned. He was the youngest of his mother's six sons. The first five had been torn from the family fireside by the conscription, and, as soldiers, had been sent to the most remote solitudes of the Empire; to her they were as dead. And now that he, too, had left, and the Countess was dead, what would become of the poor old mother? Eytmin, at the time he took up arms to join his compatriots in revolt against the Czar, had just become engaged to a girl he had long loved.

The day of his departure for Siberia, when he reached the first Ostrog, he had one brief moment of joy. The women of Varsovie are in the habit of going to this station, some ten leagues from the capital, each time that a convoy of prisoners are sent out. It was there the last adieus were exchanged between friends and relatives. Here the prisoners were permitted to embrace their relatives, and accept from them some trifling gifts. Eytmin's mother, bowed by age, and dressed in black, came to this place, therefore, and with her was Eytmin's *fiancée*. The two women wept as they embraced the young man, whom they never expected to see again. Within the circle formed by the Cossacks, women tore themselves from the arms of their husbands; — children from their fathers! There were some prisoners, orphans, possibly, who stood apart; no one said farewell to them — and were these not the most unhappy?

Eytmin's mother blessed her son, and gave him a woolen vest which her aged hands had knit, and which she hoped would in some degree protect him from the intense cold. "Every button," she whispered, "concealed a gold piece." As to the fair young girl, of whom the tyranny of the Czar had made a widow before she had tasted the bliss of a wife, her gift to Eytmin was a wooden crucifix about the length of her finger, she said:

"It is your salvation; do not lose it."

The young man's eyes were full of tears. He embraced the two women again and again. Then

the Cossacks separated them, and he entered the Ostrog, where he was to pass the night, and which, in every particular, resembled all those scattered along the road.

They, as a rule, consist of but one room; occasionally a smaller one is at the back. Around the large room runs a low wooden bench, on which the convicts are to sleep. The heat and lack of air, the dirt and insufficient space, made the place perfectly horrible; oaths, and the rattling of chains, were heard all night. Eytmin was favored by fortune, and found a place somewhat apart. This man of thirty, robust, and accustomed to the pure and healthy air of the forests, was nearly suffocated in this poisoned atmosphere. He prayed for courage as he thought of his mother and his *fiancée*, whose last words rang in his ears:

“Do not lose this crucifix; it is your salvation.”

He took the crucifix in his hand. He thought it very heavy for so small a thing. As he moved it he fancied he heard a sound, as if it contained something. He felt it all over, and finally discovered that one arm of the cross opened, and from it dropped a delicate saw. It was English steel, and excessively sharp. Eytmin at once understood; his *fiancée* had given him this with which to sever his fetters. She wished him to escape and come again to her. He determined to try it, but to find an opportunity was difficult, for he was closely watched. He resolved to run no risk, but to wait until he had just the chance he wanted, even if it were a month.

He knew that it would be a very easy thing for his guard to catch him, and also that he must perish of cold and hunger, or go to some village for food. Having no passport, he would, of course, be arrested. He preferred to wait until they were in the vicinity of some large town, where he thought he could hide himself better than in the solitude of the desert. He knew that the convoy must go to Moscow, or very near it. A brother of his mother was a servant there, employed by an English merchant. He would find him, and was sure that his uncle would aid him, and would possibly give him the means of returning to his native land. He ascertained, at each station, the distance to the capital, and when the chain reached Kalogna, a companion who had been in Moscow said to him:

“In two days we shall reach Zaráïsk, and from there to Moscow is not more than two hundred versts.”

Eytmin determined within himself that he would make his escape at that point, and began, as he walked, to use his saw on the fetters at his wrists. This was very easy, for the saw was a good one, and the iron very rusty. He was soon able to leave them in such a way that he could break them at one wrench, so slightly were they held together. When his companions began to brave the Cossacks by their hymns, he was, over and over again, on the point of snapping the irons in order to aid them. Fortunately, he contained himself. The remembrance of his mother and his *fiancée* gave him the

courage he needed to allow himself to be beaten and insulted. But when he saw Wanda dying; when he heard her designate the wretch who had sold her and her countrymen, he believed that the moment had come when he should attempt his escape. But before he went to his mother and the girl he loved, he intended to avenge his country and the Countess.

Our readers have seen how, in the confusion, he took refuge in the sledge. He lay there motionless, waiting until the escort of horsemen had gone on to the village. When he heard the last horse, he began to saw the chain on his feet—in five minutes he was free. He lifted the curtain and looked out; the icy wind cut his face. He was not re-assured by what he saw. Twenty-five rods away, in front of the Ostrog, blazed a huge fire, and thirty soldiers were eating their supper around it. Eytmin saw them through the clouds of smoke which ascended into the sky with its burthen of sparks. One sentinel walked by the prison wall, and another thirty feet in advance. The windows of the post station were faintly lighted, while above swung the lantern creaking in the wind. A confused murmur of voices came from the station.

Eytmin rose to his feet. The sentinels could not see him. He slipped one foot out upon the snow, and then the other, and keeping in the shadow of the wall, he approached the post-station where he crouched under a window and listened. A woman was speaking in Russ with the awkward pronunciation of a stranger—this was Barberine—and com-

plaining of the length of time she had been obliged to wait for the horses. When would they come, she asked. The post-master told her that it would not be long, and that a sledge must soon be there on its return from a chateau on the Kalonja route. Then a man's voice was heard, evidently scolding and addressing the woman who had just spoken. Eytmin could not understand what he said, for the language he used was unknown to him. Eytmin contrived to look through a crack, and recognized the traitor. He at once grasped the whole situation. The word *Moscow* had been uttered by the lady once and once again. The man who had sold the Countess and her countrymen was waiting for horses to go on to Moscow, and as there were no other strangers there, it was clear that the sledge in which Eytmin had taken refuge belonged to him. An idea at once darted through the brain of the fugitive. Until that moment he had been unable to decide, how he could revenge the wrongs of his associates upon this man, although he had determined to do so, even if he devoted all his life to this object. Now, thanks to the Polish name of the coachman, whom the post master had just said would be there presently, Eytmin had a ray of hope. He knew the road to Kalonja, for he had traversed it that very day. He made a long detour behind the post-station, and advanced upon the road. The solitude was appalling. He went very slowly and cautiously, at first taking care to keep the middle of the road, that his footsteps might be confounded with those of the convoy. He did not feel

weak, but the iron rings around his ankle wounded and irritated him. No matter; he would have willingly dragged a chain and ball after him, had it been necessary, for before him were liberty and the hope of vengeance.

The sky was very dark, but the snow seemed to emit light. Occasionally Eytmin stood still and listened; but he heard nothing but the tinkle of a bell and the rattle of the gun held by the sentry.

All at once snow began to fall straight and silently, for there was no wind. It was like a thick curtain before him.

He went about a verst, then stood still, thinking he had gone far enough. Suddenly he heard the sound of sleigh bells. He listened, and presently saw close at hand an empty sledge, drawn by three horses, and driven by a man on a high box. The coachman saw Eytmin, and drew up. The first words he said showed Eytmin that the man was a Pole. He at once decided on his course.

“In the name of the dear land!” he cried.

But these words, which he hoped would elicit an exclamation of joy from the man, only caused him to draw back in horror. Eytmin, unfortunately, had not to do with an honest man, but with a contemptible renegade who, not content with relinquishing his country, had sold himself to its oppressors, and was ready to betray his countrymen at their bidding.

“The dear land!” he repeated; “what dear land do you mean?”

And scenting an escaped criminal, the wretch stopped his horses.

"Do you know of more than one dear land?" asked Eytmin, in his native tongue.

"No, no; there is only one," answered the coachman, in the same language. "But what do you want of me?"

"This is what I want," said Eytmin, placing his hand on the side of the sledge. "At the station of Zaráisk there is a man, a stranger, who is waiting for some horses to go on to Moscow. This man has sold the nation. I wish to punish him. Give me your seat upon this box. When I am alone with him away from this town, I will kill him."

If Eytmin had asked the man to take him into the sledge, he would doubtless have consented, for then it would have been very easy to deliver his compatriot to the sentry at the door of the Ostrog. But to give up his place was to deprive him of all power of doing this. He had recognized Eytmin by his costume for a refugee, and the desire to obtain the money offered by the Russian government to any one who secures a fugitive prisoner, supplied the coachman with superhuman strength; and as Eytmin, filled with confidence, made a move to get into the sledge, the man hit him a ferocious blow upon the head.

"That is what highway robbers deserve!" he cried. "Take that! and that! and that!"

And he continued to strike between the eyes.

"You are astonished, I fancy!" muttered the

coachman ; “ and now I intend to tie you, and take you to the station.”

The first blow stunned Eytmin. He did not know why the coachman struck him ; but he soon understood his imprudence, and in a second realized his situation, and in another moment dropped upon the snow as if insensible. The coachman, who, of course, supposed he had fainted, jumped from the sledge and took a rope from under the seat, knelt down, and began to tie the hands of his victim. To his great dismay he found that the fainting man was as much alive as himself. Around his throat slipped two robust hands, and he fell back upon the snow. The contest was a short one. The Forest Guard had long been accustomed to fighting bears, and soon conquered his enemy. He placed his knee upon his breast, and strangled the man deliberately. The horses stood still, and the snow enveloped the two men in its white winding-sheet.

“ Ah ! you betrayed your country, did you ? ” said Eytmin, when he contemplated his ghastly work. “ And you wished to sell me to the Cossacks, did you ? You have received your recompense at last ! ”

The man was dead.

Eytmin listened. No sound was heard. He at once performed his task. He took off the coachman’s cap, his high boots and coat, and dressed himself in them with all speed. When this was done, he hesitated as to what he should do with the body. It was useless to bury it in the snow, for a thaw was

near at hand. He knew, that were he to dress the body in his clothes, it would be taken for his own. This was a difficult thing to do, and he had not time. He therefore drew the body along to a steep bank, and rolled it down into the gorge below.

"The snow will soon cover it," he said, "as well as my footsteps, and before it melts I shall be far away."

Eytmin then seated himself on the coachman's box, and gathered up the reins. He had found the long whip. The horses started off with a great jingle of bells, and the sledge soon drew up before the post-station.

Two men at once came out—one cursing in a foreign tongue, the other begging the coachman to hasten and put his horses at once into the traveler's sledge. Eytmin hurriedly obeyed without a word. The density of the atmosphere and the darkness were such, that the fire kindled before the door of the Ostrog only faintly reached the post-station. Eytmin, however, kept his face carefully turned away. He took great care to take the forage in the net attached to the back of the sledge which he had driven, and place it behind Saint Bertrand's. During this time the two travelers were escorted to the sledge by the post-master, who at once lighted the lanterns; but he had no time to look at the man who was to drive.

And hardly had Eytmin seen the Vicomte and Barberine installed among the cushions, than he gave the horses a quick lash with his whip, and

drove off at full speed. In another ten minutes the last houses of Zaráisk were out of sight. The sledge was going directly toward the North. The ice cracked under the two sharp runners, and the three horses snorted and plunged. The wind began to blow, and the snow whirled around their heads.

CHAPTER XVII.

SCRUPLES OF CONSCIENCE.

The sledge which bore Eytmin, Barberine and Saint Bertrand, traversed the first versts with the swiftness of an arrow. The road was a gradual descent, and the stinging cold excited the three horses. It was impossible for Eytmin to distinguish any thing before him. The lanterns being on either side, threw a strong light upon the horses; but beyond, all was darkness. Hardly could the fugitive see the striped posts erected on the left side of the road, which indicated the number of versts they had gone. Occasionally the darkness became even more opaque, and the snow seemed to fall less abundantly, as if some invisible obstacle detained it; and there was a strange cracking sound of broken branches. This was when the sledge was flying along a road cut through the forest, and the trees met above, while the branches broke, under the weight of ice and snow.

When to the first excitement succeeded in Eytmin's mind a certain amount of calmness, he asked himself how he should accomplish the duty he had taken upon himself. His first wish was to take his victim as far away as possible. He had suc

ceeded so far. No assistance could now reach him; and yet, Eytmin hesitated. A witness on whom he had not counted was there. This witness was a woman; in all probability the wife of the traitor. How could he kill him in her presence? and even if he were to make up his mind to this, what would become of this woman? He could not kill her, too; nor could he abandon her in this wild solitude, to perish with terror and with cold. What could he do with the sledge and the horses, whose disappearance would awaken suspicion at the station? and then, too, where would he himself take refuge after he had committed the murder?

He dwelt on these thoughts, revolving them in his mind, without finding any solution to the problem. He realized that murder was not such a simple act after all. He hesitated, not from the instinct of self-preservation, but from the recollection of his mother and his betrothed. If the Countess, before she breathed her last, had not burdened his conscience with this idea of vengeance, he might have hoped to make his escape to a foreign land with these two women. But now he must pursue this new work, and submit to what he regarded as an imperative duty. How was he to reconcile this duty with that he owed to his mother? The patriot's conscience was a tender one, and he did not know what to do.

Suddenly he threw back his head and cleared his brow. He said to himself that he owed his first duty to his country, and that he would perform it as soon as he had passed the next post. But the

next was passed, and another, and yet he had not left his seat.

"If this woman were not there," he said to himself, "it were quickly done!"

As he stimulated his horses, he looked over his shoulder at Barberine. The lanterns threw a pale light on her face; her head was on her husband's shoulder; a fur hood was drawn over her sweet eyes; and she smiled like a child in her sleep.

This touched Eytmin's heart. Until that moment he had paid little heed to Barberine, and had not once thought that she was young and pretty. He lashed his horses, and tried to harden his heart, saying to himself: "What of that?" And then he added:

"I will kill him a little further on!"

But presently he began to weigh the other side of the question.

"How could this foreigner have sold my countrymen? Why did he sell them? Was not the Countess Wanda out of her head when she brought that accusation against him? Did she not mistake this man for some other person?"

Eytmin was willing to accept the office of executioner, but he was not willing to accept that of assassin. The idea that he should commit an unjust murder made him shudder.

Meanwhile, the horses were going like the wind, and the sledge glided over the smooth snow almost without a jar. Snow was still falling, and made it impossible to see four feet in advance. Eytmin ex-

perienced a strange sensation as he felt himself borne onward with this rapidity — with this soft snow falling so silently about him.

“The Countess was right,” he said to himself, suddenly. “My scruples are those of a coward. I will tip over the sledge at the first tree, and when the villain lies upon the snow, I will choke him to death.”

He began to watch for a tree, but the road was absolutely without one. It seemed as if Fate wished to throw an obstacle before all Eytmin’s plans. A furious wind now arose, and the snow, which was very dry, rolled in heavy clouds before him, blinding the horses and the coachman, enveloping them all with its icy particles. The force of the wind was so great that the horses stood still. In vain did Eytmin urge them on with voice and whip. They were frightened, and would not move. He turned the sledge finally so that its top in some degree sheltered the horses, but he did not know what to do with himself, for he could not maintain his seat on the box, nor his footing on the snow.

Barberine had awakened suddenly by feeling the snow upon her face. She pulled the coverings over it, but the wind was so fierce that she was chilled to the bone. Her husband’s eyes were shut, and he seemed to sleep. She did not venture to disturb him, but she leaned forward and looked out. The sight she beheld struck terror to her soul. The snow was piling up so rapidly about the sledge that she thought it, with the horses, would soon be

buried in it. But she said nothing, for what advice could she give? When she saw, however, that the sledge was stationary, and the horses turned with their backs to the wind, she was somewhat reassured, and began to pity the unfortunate coachman whom she beheld struggling with the wind. Her heart was moved by pity, and she extended to him an extra pelisse, that he might have some further protection against the cold.

Eytmin did not at first understand what Barberine said, for the wind carried her voice away. He approached her, and she repeated her offer. He took the pelisse, not daring, through a feeling of false shame, to refuse it. Then Barberine insisted upon his entering the sledge, which was large enough to hold four persons. Eytmin hesitated, but she pulled him by the sleeve.

He was overwhelmed by gratitude when he, half savage as he was, found himself so close to this beautiful woman. So much goodness astonished and embarrassed him. He looked from Barberine to the man who had betrayed his countrymen, and was almost disarmed.

But Saint Bertrand was not asleep. His senses were dulled by suffering, for since Wanda's death he had not been more than half alive. The only feeling he had was horror of himself and of all about him. Had he seen Eytmin coming toward him with uplifted dagger, he would calmly have awaited the death blow.

He no longer thought, but entered the sledge

mechanically, and when he found that it was stationary he said nothing. When, too, the coachman took the seat opposite him, he still said nothing. He hardly looked at him.

Barberine, who thought him asleep, exchanged a few words with the coachman.

"How soon shall we be able to go on?" she asked.

"Before long," he replied. "The wind is getting round to the west."

"Poor things!" she said, looking at the patient animals who, with their heads well down and their limbs buried in the snow, were as motionless as if they were frozen.

"Are you a foreigner, madame?" asked Eytmin.

"Yes, I was born in Italy, of French parents, but I have been in Russia before."

Eytmin wanted to ask if she had ever been in Poland, but he was afraid of betraying himself. He said, however:

"Has your husband been in Russia before?"

"No, never."

Eytmin became bolder.

"Perhaps he has been in Poland?"

"No; I resided in Varsovie for some years, but that was before my marriage. My husband has never been farther north than Vienna. Are you a Pole?" she asked, suddenly.

Eytmin started. "No, madame," he answered. Saint Bertrand did not understand a word of

this dialogue, which was in Russ. He did not even try to understand it.

"How could that man have betrayed my country," said Eytmin to himself, "if he never was in it?"

For a moment he fancied that the Countess had confounded the wife with the husband. But Barberine had just given such a strong proof of the kindness of her heart, that he could not believe her capable of an infamous act. More troubled than ever, he determined to follow these people to Moscow, and there verify the accusation of the Countess before he took any fatal steps. But this determination was not very easy to act upon. The wind at last abating, Eytmin got out of the sledge and assisted the horses from the snow that was piled about them; and, finally, not without much difficulty, got his horses back into the road again. The progress of the animals after this was very slow. Not only were they fatigued, but the snow was deeper. In another hour the lights of Kalonja were seen. It was here they were to stop, and he was to leave the travelers. But he had arranged a way of accompanying them without their suspecting it.

When he reached the station, he shouted out as is usual:

"Are there horses?"

"To go where?" asked the man, opening the door with a yawn.

"To Moscow," said Eytmin, turning his back as he busied himself over his horses.

"How many do you want?" asked the man.

"Three," said Barberine, as she leaned out and presented her *carte de circulation*, "and pray, hasten. I will give a handsome *pour-boire*."

At the appearance of this card, there was a great bustle in the station. The coachman who was to replace Eytmin was in the stable, from which he emerged at the end of a minute. In another he had harnessed his horses, and presently they were off; but as they passed the stable, the sledge received a sudden shock from a stone, as the coachman thought, hidden under the snow. He was mistaken, however. The shock had been caused by Eytmin, who had thrown himself into the net filled with forage; and it was in this somewhat uncomfortable fashion that he reached Moscow. There he was seized by a sudden panic. The custom-house officers would, of course, examine the fodder; but they did not, thanks to the *carte de circulation*. Eytmin held his breath while the sledge glided through the streets of the town. It was growing dark, and when the sledge stopped, in the court-yard of the hotel which Barberine had indicated to the coachman, Eytmin was able to escape from his concealment, without being seen, and to slip out to the street after having read the name of the hotel, written in huge letters over the *porte-cochère*.

At first he moved very slowly. The Russian costume he wore was such an excellent disguise, that no one would have taken him for a Pole. The crowd in the street at that hour was very great.

When he had walked several blocks, he approached a man who was sweeping the snow from the front of a shop. He asked him what way he should go to reach the Kremlin. It was in that vicinity that Eytmin's uncle resided. When he reached the Kremlin, he made new inquiries, and presently knocked at the door of a house, and in the servant who opened it, he recognized the brother of his mother.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FRENCH ARE ALWAYS THERE!

Eytmin's uncle was named Leszek. At first he did not recognize the fugitive whom he had not seen for several years, and his Russian costume moreover was in itself a complete disguise. At the first words, however, that the young man uttered, his uncle clasped him in his arms; then realizing that something extraordinary must have taken place in Poland, to bring his nephew to Moscow, and in that dress, he closed the door and drew him into a small room where he spent his time, and which was an anteroom to his master's study.

"How are our people?" asked the old patriot.

"Alas! uncle," answered Eytmin, "they are very unhappy!"

And he went on to tell the sad story of the last insurrection and of the innumerable arrests.

Leszek lifted his hands to Heaven:

"But what do they think of this in France? Do they still hope?"

France has always been regarded by Poland as their one sympathizer.

Eytmin could not reply to this question. He was an obscure soldier in the national cause, and the

chiefs had confided nothing to their subordinates of their provisions and calculations. They were told to fight, and they obeyed, knowing that it was in a good cause.

"And how happens it that you are in this disguise?" said old Leszek at last.

Eytmin told the whole story, and confessed the murder. The uncle found nothing to say, for it was committed in self-defense. But Eytmin wisely said nothing in regard to Saint Bertrand, or of the project he had formed of punishing his treason.

When Eytmin had finished, his uncle said:

"You must be very careful here, for the police in Moscow have sharp eyes. Fortunately, there are ways of closing them. I must consult my master."

A bell was heard at this moment. Leszek arose and told his nephew to wait. But as the man was going out, the door opened, and the master appeared.

Monsieur Tiphaine was a Frenchman of about thirty, and had been living for some ten years in Moscow, as the representative of a banking house, and had made a handsome fortune. He was much liked, and generally regarded as a good fellow. In fact, there was not in all Russia a more obliging person than Monsieur Tiphaine. There was no limit to his energy when he was desirous of doing any one a favor. His purse was open to his friends as well as to the poor, and those who knew him could not do him a greater injury than to ask any one but himself to do them a service. This gay Parisian was

a Liberal in France, and now, in Russia, was the eager defender of Poland.

At first the Russian police thought him dangerous, and put him under surveillance; but, when they saw that all he did, was to preach the emancipation of Poland to those people, who had the best reason in the world for not allowing themselves to be convinced, they began by degrees to consider him as wanting in common sense. It must be admitted, in order to explain this excessive tolerance, that Monsieur Tiphaine had never omitted paying handsomely for the privilege he claimed. He purchased the right to speak, in a land where men are mute, and was delighted at being able to manifest his opinions among people who concealed theirs within the innermost recesses of their natures. He once went so far as to sing at his own table, before an audience of Russians, the most audacious of Béranger's melodies.

"Who is that man?" he said to Leszek, as his eyes fell on Eytmin.

Leszek at once poured out his nephew's story. Monsieur Tiphaine opened his eyes and shook his head. A Polish rebel in his house! An escaped refugee under his roof! That was indeed a most unexpected boon. Now, thanks to him, he could have some fun at the expense of the Russian police. He insisted on hearing the minutest particulars of Eytmin's escape, and then, holding out his hand, he said:

"You did well to come here, my boy. A Russian would have denounced you, probably; but a

Frenchman—never! When there is any way of compromising oneself for a brave man, France is always on hand!

Monsieur Tiphaine's eyes flashed while he spoke. He insisted on Eytmin's throwing all his garments aside, and dressing himself in a suit of his own, he then ordered dinner for him, and himself took his seat in the office while he ate.

"My boy," he said, "we must consult as to the best way we may adopt to manage this matter. It is clear to me that as soon as a thaw comes, and the body of the coachman is found in the ravine, it will be taken for yours, and you did well to throw your coat over it. All pursuit for you will cease when that body is found. But that will not explain the disappearance of the coachman who drove the sledge from the station of Zaráisk to that of Kalonja. What became of the man after that? It will be known that I have a new servant, and I shall be questioned as to where he came from, and what induced me to take him into my service. I must, therefore, go to-morrow and denounce you to the police."

"Denounce him!" cried Leszek, aghast.

"Wait a moment, simpleton," answered his master. "I will tell the Commissioner that your nephew, though I shall not call him your nephew, got tired of being a coachman. You see, I intend him to personate the man who now lies under the snow, and has come to Moscow with the intention of obtaining a situation in some good house. I will add that he

came to me, that I have taken a fancy to him, and that I beg permission to keep him. They will refuse this permission at first, but I know how to get it, and it will cost me one hundred roubles."

Leszek kissed his master's hand, and Eytmin reflected. To appear to be one of the men who was oppressing his beloved land distressed him greatly; but the thought of Siberia distressed him more. He thanked Monsieur Tiphaine, therefore, and said he would follow his instructions blindly.

The next morning, when the Frenchman was going out, he summoned Eytmin, who was assisting his uncle in putting the house in order.

"You, of course, found that man's passport in some one of his pockets. Give it to me; I may want it."

Eytmin handed this passport to Monsieur Tiphaine, who glanced it over.

"Remember," he said, "that you were born at Kamunets, that you are twenty-three, and that your name is Poielski."

Monsieur Tiphaine returned in less than an hour, and looked quite radiant.

"I was just in time," he said. "They had begun to make inquiries for the man who had disappeared. Upon my word, my boy," he added, with a laugh, "you ought to make yourself very useful here to repay me for all I have expended. You have cost me two hundred roubles already."

Eytmin did not know in what terms to express his gratitude, but his master did not wait.

"I don't know how I am to occupy you," he said, "for Leszek has not enough to do in my house. But it is certainly better for you to live in idleness at Moscow, than to work in the mines at Siberia; and, if you don't like living here, I will find a place for you elsewhere.

At this moment the door-bell rang, and Eytmin ran to open it. When he returned, his master noticed that he was very pale.

"What is the matter?" asked Monsieur Tiphaine. "Has your victim come to life again?"

"No; it is the other," said Eytmin.

"The other! What on earth do you mean?"

Eytmin was about to say that he had just admitted into the house the traitor who had sold his compatriots—the Vicomte de Saint Bertrand—but he checked himself suddenly.

"The man, I mean, whom I drove from Zaráisk to Kalonja, and in whose sledge I was concealed when we came into Moscow."

"Did he know you?" asked Monsieur Tiphaine; but as Saint Bertrand entered the room at that moment, Monsieur Tiphaine did not wait for an answer, but advanced to meet him. Saint Bertrand had not recognized Eytmin. He came to call on his countryman, and also to say to him that he was the bearer of a letter of credit on his banking-house.

Monsieur Tiphaine took him into his library and asked what on earth had brought him to Moscow; and when he learned that the Vicomte was the hus-

band of the celebrated Barberine, he was especially civil, as he had formerly known the *danseuse*.

"I shall pay my respects to your wife at once," he said.

"No, no," answered Saint Bertrand. "She is very tired and is still asleep; but can't you dine with us to-night?"

"With pleasure; but in the mean time, what may I do for you? Would you like to see the Kremlin, or visit any of the Museums?"

"I am infinitely obliged," said Saint Bertrand; "but I really take little interest in Museums. Besides, I shall have plenty of time to see them all, as I propose to remain here eighteen months. But tell me—we are wretchedly accommodated at the hotel—can you help me to any furnished apartments?"

"Certainly I can. I know of one now, not five minutes walk from your theater. We might go there at once, if you say so."

"I am quite ready."

"Let us be off at once, then."

"You must assist me, too, in making up my establishment. I have brought no servants with me," continued Saint Bertrand.

"How many servants do you require?"

"A maid, a cook, a valet—three; that is all."

Monsieur Tiphaine at once reflected that this was an excellent time to place his *protégé*.

"Your valet is all ready for you. It was the fellow who opened the door. I can answer for him,

and will part with him to oblige you. He is a Pole."

"A Pole!"

The Vicomte shook his head sadly.

"You do not like Poles, then?" he asked.

"No, I do not, indeed."

Monsieur Tiphaine looked at him in a melancholy sort of way. In his opinion Poland and France were as one nation; but filled with the idea of securing so good a place for this young man, he went on:

"I must tell you," he said, suddenly remembering that Eytmin must pass for Poielski, "that the fellow is a Pole only by birth. A long time ago he deserted his country for that of the Muscovites."

Saint Bertrand, hearing this, hesitated. The man who was thus suggested to him had betrayed Poland, or, at all events, had turned his back upon her; he, therefore, was a perfectly safe person to admit into the house. He was, besides, not displeased to feel that he, infamous as he was, could see every hour in the day a man who was more infamous still.

"Can I see this man?" he asked suddenly.

Monsieur Tiphaine rang the bell, and Eytmin entered.

Saint Bertrand looked at him, and Eytmin's eyes sank.

"What is your name?" asked the Vicomte.

"Poielski, sire."

"Does he understand French?"

"Not in the least."

"Well, that does not much matter. My wife speaks Russ. But he must have his hair cut, and lay aside the dress he wears."

"That is easily done," answered Monsieur Tiphaine, who then turned to Eytmin to ask if he were willing to enter the service of this stranger.

Eytmin could hardly believe his ears. God evidently desired him to punish the traitor, or this opportunity would never have been offered him. He promptly agreed to the proposition. Saint Bertrand put two louis in his hand to close the bargain, and then went away with Monsieur Tiphaine to look at the apartments which had been mentioned, and which he found very satisfactory, and that same day took possession of them with his wife.

At six o'clock Monsieur Tiphaine went to Saint Bertrand's to dinner. Eytmin accompanied him. His well-shaven face and new costume made him unrecognizable.

Barberine did not dream for a moment that her husband's valet was the coachman whom she had insisted on receiving into her sledge during the frightful tempest on the Kalonja road, and was delighted to see her excellent friend, Monsieur Tiphaine.

At eleven o'clock that gentleman took his departure, Barberine and her husband retired, and Eytmin was at liberty to go to his chamber. There, upon a chair, was a little valise which contained a few articles given him by his uncle. He opened this valise and drew from his pocket a long and

pointed knife which he had purchased that day with the money given him by Saint Bertrand. He looked at it, and as he placed it carefully in the bottom of the valise he said, with an air of menace: "Now, sir, we will see if you have really betrayed the nation."

CHAPTER XIX.

NEW DUTIES.

The first thing that Eytmin did after he was installed as a servant in Saint Bertrand's house, was to learn French. Barberine made that study peculiarly easy for him ; besides, all Russians have a wonderful facility for learning languages. The name of any object, however small, pronounced before Eytmin, was immediately fixed in his memory. Each day, as he waited at table, he tried to understand what was said. Barberine was quite touched by the young man's determination, and did her best to teach him the meaning of the words most in use. Eytmin was naturally somewhat confused at first, but after a few months, thanks to his perseverance, he was able to understand all that was said before him in French.

Saint Bertrand assisted her, although he had no intention of doing so. He had been greatly struck by the zeal of his valet. The Vicomte loved quiet and watchful persons about him, who never spoke except to answer a question. In fact, he liked an intelligent automaton, with no interest in any thing but their duties, and he recognized these qualities in Eytmin. He felt that he had never really been

served until now. Every thing was prepared for his toilette with the most watchful care, and every wish anticipated. He was the only servant whom the Vicomte had ever employed who was always at his post, ready to run at the first sound of the bell. His manners were irreproachable, and he did not drink.

Saint Bertrand began to be attached to his new valet, as much, at least, as he could be attached to any creature, and condescended to ask him, when he entered the room in the morning, what sort of a day it was, and if madame were up.

Was this unusual familiarity caused by their common treason? This was the question that Saint Bertrand constantly asked himself. It was true that this domestic was himself so reserved that his manner piqued Saint Bertrand. Never on Eytmin's face was there the faintest consciousness that he was in the presence of the man accused of having betrayed his country; but he always treated his master with the greatest deference. If the Vicomte indulged in a little joke, Eytmin listened in stolid, irresponsible silence. At last the Vicomte came to the conclusion that this tall, good looking fellow, having a secret, and a shameful one, to conceal, could not bear it as stoically as he did his own, and that he must be a weak sort of fellow. Consequently, he, while rendering full justice to his valet's zeal, in a measure despised him.

Eytmin, in the meanwhile, watched every action of his master's, to discover how much truth there

was in Wanda's accusation, while at the same time feeling the strongest sympathy for Barberine. Something in his heart pleaded her cause. Seeing her, as he did, he was struck by her amiability and sweetness; by her honesty and straightforward conduct, as well as by her courage, for she worked without ceasing, and divided her life between the demands of her profession, her household cares, and the affection she felt for her husband.

Notwithstanding the ill conduct of which he was guilty toward her in Paris, in regard to Monsieur de Lorrieux, Barberine's affection had strengthened steadily, and although Saint Bertrand was by no means always gracious, she bore all his ill temper with tranquil resignation.

We must here take occasion to say that Saint Bertrand having married and settled down, and having literally nothing to do, had become captious and exacting. He was horribly *ennuyé* at Moscow, and was sorely tempted to resume his former habits, but not quite daring to do so, and withheld by his ever-growing fear of poverty, he was always in what is popularly termed "a state of mind." He tyrannized over his wife, bullied his servants, and fumed and fretted against Russia, where, nevertheless, he had really been most courteously received. Ashamed of the cowardice that had impelled him most unnecessarily to leave France, and feeling that he had nothing further to fear from his treason, he talked of returning to Paris, and declared that when he did so he would never move from it again, for, in his opin-

ion, life was not worth having in any other city than that, where every wish could be instantly gratified.

The existence of these three persons was singularly uniform. Each morning, Saint Bertrand arose at nine o'clock, and passed two good hours in dressing and in thinking. His meditations were sometimes of his past, but more generally dwelt upon the future. His great wish was still to grow rich, for money represented to his perverted judgment now, more than ever, the summit of felicity. A luxurious, indolent life, was the height of his ambition; it seemed to him that horses, play, and women, were all that was truly worthy of a man of fashion, and nothing interested him outside of these. At eleven o'clock he took his seat at the table with Barberine, but he never addressed her, except to make some unpleasant observation in regard to her toilette, or the style in which her hair was dressed, or more particularly of the manner in which she represented her *rôles*. To hear him, one would have supposed that Barberine was wilfully blind to the tastes of the public. Her dancing, he said, did not appeal to the senses. It was too intellectual by far. He reproached her with her glances, which, he said, were mocking, rather than appealing; and her gestures were frolicsome, instead of voluptuous. He cited the example of Fanny Ellsler, who had, so to speak, absolutely taken the public by storm by exaggerating the character of her Spanish dances, which were in themselves sufficiently wanton; and declared that before long every body would be weary of Barbe-

rine's style, which, correct as it was, had nothing in the least impassioned about it, and was, moreover, always the same. Barberine replied, without loss of temper, that she looked on dancing as a joy and amusement, and that she expressed her joy and gayety by dancing. Her smile, she said, was natural, and expressed her real feeling; and her gestures were no more artificial than her smiles.

Her husband, in seeking to change what he called her mannerisms, gave her most pernicious counsel. In fact, to require an artist to express feelings that he has never experienced, is as absurd as to ask a horse to climb trees like bears, or to expect bears to skim over the ground with the velocity of the horse.

Saint Bertrand never made to any one else the observations which he thought it his duty to make to his wife. Far from that; for as soon as he had an audience, his tone was vastly different. To hear him talk then, one would have supposed that there was nothing more obnoxious to his sense of decency, than to see a woman seek to give expression to physical passion. He did not understand how such things could be tolerated on the boards. They, in his opinion, should be instantaneously hissed. If he expressed himself thus, it was because he feared lest Barberine's talents might be overrated. Since his marriage he had been constantly in fear that her reputation would diminish, and therefore her salary. Every morning at breakfast, he began his eternal quarrel, and when his wife went out for her lesson,

he tried to kill time by reading the French newspapers—those at least which contained the *on-dits* of the clubs and *coulisses*. About two o'clock he went out and strolled through the streets. Returning home, he sat at the dinner-table as long as possible, and in the evening went to the theater. As to Barberine, she had hardly a moment to herself, so absorbed was she by the duties of her profession.

But the member of the household who found time hang most heavily on his hands was Eytmin. In fact he was on the *qui vive* all the time, watching every look, listening to every word, and storing them all in his memory. One day he went to the theater, and was greatly struck by what he saw. His mistress danced, and never had he thought her so attractive; but he could not understand how she ventured to appear in public so scantily clothed; nor could he imagine that a woman could be so graceful and so airy. The poor fellow had never set foot before in a theater, and the ballets with all their luxurious settings seemed to him like fairy land. He went away that night, buried in thought. Not only had he so far failed to find the smallest clue to the mystery he was seeking to penetrate, but he lived in an atmosphere which was to him new and strange. The affection Barberine showed her husband astonished him, for he was cold, and often sulky. Eytmin detested him all the more, because he had become sincerely attached to Barberine. This attachment was strengthened by an occasion when the *danseuse* showed him profound sympathy. One day

a peddler who came from Varsovie on his way to the great fair of Nijni-Novgorod, arrived at old Leszek's, and announced to him his sister's death. The exile of her younger child, and her poverty at the end of a long and troubled life, had weighed heavily upon her and robbed her of all courage. Without any apparent malady she gradually declined, until, one morning, she was found dead in her bed. Leszek, on receiving this sad intelligence, sent at once for his nephew. Eytmin was crushed at this news, and for a few moments could not speak. After a while he asked for his *fiancée*. The peddler shook his head sadly. A month after Eytmin's departure with the chain of prisoners, the Czar wishing to recompense the zeal of the military governor, Pierre Rogatchef, gave to him the confiscated property of the Countess Wanda. Eytmin's *fiancée*, born at Podolie, was a serf of the Countess Wanda, who had taken her to Varsovie; but shortly after the imprisonment of her mistress, the young girl received orders to go back to her parents, who resided in the vicinity of Kamienets. It was there that one of the favorite servants of the Prince saw her, and lost his heart to her. He asked the hand of the young serf from her master, who at once gave his consent. In vain did the poor child weep and implore; in vain did she say that she was already affianced, and that her religion forbade her to marry a man who was of the Greek faith. No heed was paid to these tears or objections, and she was married by force to this Russian who had gained the favor of

General Rogatchef, and then carried four hundred leagues from her country to an estate belonging to the Prince. Since then her name had not been heard.

Eytmin's despair was heart-breaking to witness, as he listened to this recital from the lips of the Jew. He laid his face upon his arms, and wept as a mother weeps at the cradle of her dying child. Barberine came in at that moment, and seeing the great grief of her servant she was deeply touched, and asked him what she could do for him. Eytmin could not speak, but his uncle told her that the young man had lost his mother, and his *fiancée* had been married by force to a Russian.

Barberine took a seat by the side of her servant, and laid her hand on his. Eytmin was much moved by these silent marks of sympathy. He slipped down upon his knees before his mistress and, carried away by gratitude, pressed his lips to her feet. The Jew and old Leszek were stupefied; Monsieur Tiphaine, who was present, turned away to conceal his emotion; but the Vicomte de Saint Bertrand shrugged his shoulders; the whole scene seemed to him preposterous and ridiculous. He led his wife to the *salon*, and laughed at her all through dinner. But nothing he said affected Barberine, who, from that time, regarded Eytmin with especial favor, almost like a friend, in fact; and in Eytmin's eyes, Barberine was from that time a creature above all other, to whom he vowed all affection and respect.

In the meantime the moment was near at hand

when something of the truth of which he was in search should appear to Eytmin. It came one evening, when he least expected it. He understood French perfectly well by this time. His master and himself were driving in the vicinity of the city. Barberine was alone at home. Saint Bertrand was driving. Eytmin was seated behind his master. Summer had come, and the country was white with blossoms.

CHAPTER XX.

RECOGNITION.

Saint Bertrand had been driving for about half an hour in the direction of the vast gardens which occupy the ancient fossès of Moscow, when a *droschki*, very elegant in all its equipment, and driven by a lady, passed his carriage. The lady leaned forward a little, as if she recognized Saint Bertrand, who, however, had only caught a glimpse of a pale face and piercing eyes under the veil which preserved her from the dust. He touched his horse lightly with his whip, wishing to catch another glimpse of the person who had shown him this mark of attention. Again he passed the *droschki*, and the lady again leaned forward.

This time the Vicomte recognized her. It was Madame Méléline, and when he saw her Saint Bertrand looked annoyed. The Princess recalled a whole world of things which were intensely mortifying to him. But there was no possible retreat; the two carriages were on a narrow road, rolling on, side by side. He made the best of the circumstances, and bowed with an air of great respect. Méléline ordered her coachman to drive more slow-

ly, and entered into conversation with him as if nothing of any especial interest had ever occurred between them.

"I did not anticipate the pleasure of seeing you in Moscow, madame," said Saint Bertrand.

"I have only been here a week," she answered, with a smile.

"And I have been here a year, already, and am disgusted with the place."

"And why?" she asked. "I know that your wife has obtained a great success here."

"Yes," replied the Vicomte, with an air of conceit, "the public of Moscow have been very kind toward her. But flattering as has been their reception, the success of a wife does not always take the place of all other amusements to her husband."

"Then you are *ennuyé* here?"

"If you will allow me to speak frankly, I will say that this is the first pleasurable moment I have enjoyed since I came."

"I see that you are as amiable as ever," she answered.

The horses were at this moment creeping along side by side. Saint Bertrand, as he continued to talk, asked himself why the Princess, after having once ignominiously dismissed him, was now disposed to greet him with so much cordiality. He could not forget the part she had played in his life, ever since she had ruined him at Baden, by extorting Wanda's papers from him; nor that she had then requited his passion by contempt. He began to think that

she regretted having driven him from her, and was full of hope.

As to M^léline herself, she was calm and serene, almost familiar, too, but evidently weighing her every word as she smilingly conversed.

"I must tell you," she said, suddenly, "that one of your old friends arrived here last evening."

"And who may that be, madame?" asked Saint Bertrand.

"Rogatchef."

On hearing the name of the Governor of Varsovie, Eytmin, who had been sitting stiff and erect behind his master, listening with divided attention, started violently, and turned deadly pale. The poor fellow did not know that there were two Rogatchefs, and that this one of whom M^léline spoke was the nephew of the General. He instantly concluded if his master was the friend of the Governor, that he had really betrayed his country.

Saint Bertrand also started, and then hastily asked the Princess what Rogatchef was doing in Moscow.

"Seeking consolation," said the Princess. "It seems that he took to St. Petersburg with him a certain Heloise from the Grand Opera of Paris."

"Yes, so I heard," interrupted Saint Bertrand.

"And," continued the lady, "it also seems that this Heloise was none too grateful, and left Rogatchef in the companionship of an Italian singer. She is at Naples, I believe, now, and Rogatchef became disgusted with St. Petersburg, where he was much

laughed at, and so came on here, with the hope that I would help him forget his sorrows."

"Poor fellow!" said Saint Bertrand, with a laugh of jesting commiseration.

"I will tell you, also," resumed the Princess, "that he knows you are in Moscow, and intends calling upon you."

Saint Bertrand was not a man to harbor malice, and he forgot several unpleasant *rencontres* which had occurred in past days with this little prince, and answered quietly:

"I shall be delighted to see him."

Meanwhile the Princess Méléline seemed desirous of making additional communications to the Vicomte de Saint Bertrand; but she did not care to say more in the presence of witnesses.

"I must leave you now," she said. "You will, of course, come and see me;" she added with a smile: "We must talk over old times."

"Nothing would be more agreeable to me," said Saint Bertrand. "Tell me when you will be kind enough to receive me?"

"To-morrow evening at eight o'clock I shall expect you."

"Very well; but where am I to call?"

"Ah! yes, to be sure; the address is rather an important matter. No. 20, Faubourg de la Porte Rouge. Can you remember?"

"Perfectly, madame."

The two carriages had now reached a cross-road. The Princess, with a gracious bow to the Vicomte,

ordered her coachman to turn to the right, while Saint Bertrand took the road to the left.

Eytmin had not lost one word of all those which had passed between the Princess and his master; but he had acquired only hints—no knowledge of that for which he was seeking. But hearing the Princess appoint an hour to receive the Vicomte, he said that if he could manage to be present at their interview, he would then be able to find out the truth in regard to the treason of which his master had been accused. He determined, if it were possible, that his master should take him with him the next evening. Chance made this an easy thing to accomplish. Barberine danced that evening, and Eytmin was therefore at liberty. When, an hour after the departure of his mistress, he saw the Vicomte dressed with unusual care leave the house, he slipped out after him.

The Vicomte went directly to the house, the number of which had been given him by the Princess. It was a small hotel, whose exterior was not lacking in elegance, and consisted of one floor above the *rez de chaussée*. A spacious garden surrounded it. Saint Bertrand was received at the gate by the servant, and, entering the house, the door closed behind him, leaving Eytmin alone in the street, now almost deserted. He asked himself how he had been foolish enough to suppose that he could enter the house without being seen. He looked up and down the street to be sure that there was no one in sight, and then quickly

climbed the wall, and, clinging to the branches of a tree, allowed himself to drop into the garden. He groped his way for some few minutes through the bushes, trying to form some idea of the place into which he had made so abrupt an entrance, when a murmur of voices came to his ear, and he found that two persons were walking in a path near by, and presently recognized the Princess and his master. Both were laughing and talking gayly, their conversation was evidently of no importance, and yet, they were speaking in very subdued voices.

They walked for some few minutes, and then seated themselves upon a bench not twenty feet from where Eytmin was concealed, who, at once crawled upon his hands and knees over the turf, taking infinite pains to keep behind the bushes, and at last succeeded in getting close to the bench in the rear of two clumps of roses; when he was there ensconced, he listened with all his ears.

"Yes," said the Princess, "I am heartily ashamed of myself. You bring back to me all that is most repulsive to a woman; and yet, I wished to see you."

"Was it not you who compelled me to do as I did?" answered Saint Bertrand. "Did I not refuse over and over again? I insist that you are entirely responsible for my act."

"But I was not Wanda's lover," answered the Princess, "I owed her nothing; in fact, I hardly knew her. Then, too, I did all I could to save

her; that she is dead to-day, is because promises were broken that were made to me."

"Why should we go back to those dreary subjects?" said Saint Bertrand. "We have both of us been led by Fate. You have yourself been the instrument of a most pitiless policy. I, on my part, resisted as long as I could, and then yielded in despair to what at the moment seemed to me a necessity. The responsibility of what we have done devolves not on you, nor on me; but on him who ordered your acts. The sword does not answer for the blood that it sheds."

"How glad I should be," answered the Princess, "if I could, like yourself, encase my heart in an armor of sophisms."

All this was only comprehensible in a very small degree to Eytmin. Wanda's name, it is true, had been pronounced, and the Vicomte had been spoken of as her lover; but how and why had these two persons whom he was now watching, betrayed the Countess? This was what he could in no way understand. The Princess had apparently wished to save Wanda's life, and Saint Bertrand said something about having yielded to necessity. What was this necessity? Eytmin hoped that in the course of the conversation he should learn all that was requisite for him to know. Unfortunately, however, the discussion now took another turn, which was, however, interesting enough to him.

"What a foolish thing it was for you to marry," said the Princess.

"What would you have?" answered Saint Bertrand. "After the unflattering avowal you made, and the dismissal you gave me, I never supposed I should see you again. I felt none the less, however, that we were made for each other, and you were constantly in my thoughts. I deplored our separation, and did my best to forget you; but it was impossible."

"I can not endure your wife," said Méléline, abruptly.

"And why? She thinks only of her art, and would never offend you in any way."

"She offends me by being your wife."

"Your humility amazes me," returned Saint Bertrand. "Are you not her superior in all things? And are you not, moreover, above all such considerations?"

"I am not above such considerations," said Méléline. "Life overwhelms me. I do not know if it be the chastisement of having lived badly, but I am overwhelmed with an *ennui* that daily grows more difficult to bear. Each morning, when I wake, I curse the light, and ask myself if the world is never coming to an end. I have had quite enough of it. Ah! if I could only feel deeply for some thing or somebody, or even for an idea! If I could but be called upon to sacrifice my fortune and my life for a cause elevated enough, to redeem the evil that I have done. But no, there is nothing in this world; besides, I am very tired. I came here on your account. I fancied that I could have a sensation again when

near you ; that, having loved you, I might love you once again, possibly, and I find you utterly commonplace ! You are neither happy enough, nor miserable enough, to interest me. If, through some violent subversion of moral sense, you would only defend your crime ; but you content yourself with the shallowest excuses."

"Come, come ! my dear Princess," interrupted Saint Bertrand, "do you realize that I could, were I so disposed, retort by saying some few things that might be very mortifying ?"

"Why do you not let me hear these things then ?" she retorted. "But no, you are as calm and as comfortable as if you and I had not both of us committed the most frightful atrocities."

"Let us walk on, dear madame," said the Vicomte.

"Ah ! Good Heavens !" she exclaimed, "why can't this man realize that if he were to kill me, he would at least quicken my pulse and give me a sensation !"

She arose as she spoke ; Saint Bertrand drew her arm familiarly through his, and they moved slowly away.

Eytmin was frozen stiff with horror.

Presently they passed him again.

"Does your wife know," said M^{lle} M^{lle}dine, in the calmest tones, "all that took place between us in regard to Wanda ?"

"No, indeed !" answered Saint Bertrand, "a man does not boast of such things."

"You ought to leave your wife," said the Princess.

"And why, pray?" asked Saint Bertrand, very quietly. "In that case, what would become of her?"

Eytmin did not catch the reply, for their voices dropped as they moved away.

It was about ten o'clock when the Vicomte, with his arm around the waist of the Princess, led her into the house.

CHAPTER XXI.

GRATITUDE.

“What a villain!” said Eytmin, to himself, as he saw his master disappear with the Princess. “God has given him one of the best and loveliest of wives, and he deceives her with this mad woman, who treats him as if she despised him.”

He was overwhelmed by what he had heard, and crouching in the same place, gazed at the door which had closed upon the strange pair. At last he arose; a fine, cold rain had begun to fall; he found the wall and climbed it easily enough, and then took his way home through the deserted streets. He felt that he had ascertained enough of the truth to venture on the act of justice which he had so long been contemplating. He meant to take his knife and cut down his master, without one word, as he would some beast of prey, which any one might kill with propriety.

But, buried in these thoughts, Eytmin imperceptibly wandered away from his master’s dwelling. Eytmin knew little of Moscow, and lost himself. The rain was pouring down, and, after walking for an hour, with his soul in a whirl of passionate anger, he suddenly started, and looked about him. He had

no idea where he was; all the shops were closed, and there was not a human being on the streets of whom he could ask his way. He, therefore, stumbled on blindly, wet through, as he was, to his skin. He wondered if he were not going to have a fever; his head was heavy and throbbing with intense pain.

Discouraged, finally, he took refuge under a church portico, and, sheltered by a massive pillar, looked at the reflection of the gas lamps quivering on the wet sidewalks, while he sought to recall all he had heard and all he had learned that evening; but events and persons were as yet a hopeless mass of confusion. The Countess Wanda, Rogatchef, his master and his mistress, this woman whose very name he knew not, his dead mother and his betrothed, were mingled with the terrible recollections of the insurrection at Varsovie, and of his rapid flight in the sledge—the ballet at the theater, and this dark garden path through which these two shadows flitted. Filled with sudden terror, he turned to flee, but he was faint and ill; a sharp pain was in his head, and he grasped the pillar for support; but presently he fell, an inert mass.

The next morning the police found Eytmin at the foot of the pillar. The church where he had taken refuge was not a hundred feet from his master's dwelling. He was at once recognized, for his face was a familiar one in that quarter, and he was at once carried to the house of the Vicomte de Saint Bertrand, who, having returned at mid-

night, had been greatly disturbed by the non-appearance of his domestic. Considerably incensed by being awakened at this early hour, he took it for granted that Eytmin was drunk, and bade them carry him to his bed.

Some hours later, after ringing in vain for his servant, the Vicomte went up to his room, where he was much startled to see Eytmin lying on his bed in a burning fever and delirium. Saint Bertrand sent at once for a physician, who, when he came, declared that the man had typhus fever, but knew not to what cause to attribute it. But Eytmin's robust temperament, the sudden change from the country and out-of-door life to the city, the conflicting emotions to which he had so long been a prey, the rain and exposure to the weather, were, after all, quite sufficient causes for a malady which, often manifests itself spontaneously. The poor fellow was very ill, and lay in a stupor for hours; livid spots were upon his face, and from time to time a light trembling shook him from head to foot. The physician, after examining him carefully, shook his head. He was evidently very anxious.

Barberine went up to see her servant with the physician. She was always ready to fulfill any duty of humanity. This excellent woman was of the people, and the luxury with which she was now surrounded only seemed to make her more kindly disposed and sympathetic toward those in any humble station.

When her husband heard the word "typhus," he started back, and then announced his intention of sending his valet to the hospital. But Barberine opposed this intention, and the physician supported her by saying that he would probably die during the removal; consequently, the Vicomte was forced to yield.

Meanwhile, Leszek and Monsieur Tiphaine also came, the latter in great despair at seeing his *protégé* so ill and in this badly ventilated room. He wished to take him to his own house, but the physician insisted on his waiting until the disease took a favorable turn. It was then decided that Eytmin should remain where he was, and that his uncle should be installed in the room as nurse.

Saint Bertrand was in the worst possible humor all that day. He was not only compelled to wait upon himself, but also to listen to his wife's reproaches for his hardness of heart. It seemed to her almost incredible that her husband could, for a moment, have entertained the idea of sending his servant to the hospital, and she told him that it was his duty, if not to take care of the man himself, at least to go up to his room from time to time.

"My dear child," answered Saint Bertrand, impatiently, "don't you know that typhus is contagious?"

"Very well, then; if you will do nothing for this poor fellow, I shall take care of him myself."

Saint Bertrand uttered an oath.

"What!" he exclaimed; "would you nurse a servant? Have you lost your mind?"

"At all events, I have not lost my heart," answered Barberine, quietly.

"I forbid you to enter that room."

"And why, if you please?"

"Because I forbid it."

"But that is not enough for me."

"Take care, Barberine! you know that I am not over amiable."

"I am well aware of that; nevertheless, I shall obey the instincts of pity, and assist in nursing this poor fellow."

Saint Bertrand saw that he had now an excellent opportunity of pleasing Méléline. To quarrel with Barberine now was a very easy matter, and from that quarrel to a definite rupture was but a short step. But the cold-hearted calculator was not sure enough of the Princess to sacrifice Barberine, who was his sole support now, as she had been ever since the beginning of their *liaison*. It was neither duty nor affection which restrained him from once more risking his whole prosperity and future; it was his interest alone which held him back.

He controlled himself, therefore, and as he was afraid that he might say something for which he would be sorry, he took his hat and went to spend the morning with the Princess, leaving his wife to do as she pleased.

She profited by the absence of her husband to put her plan, which was kinder than it was wise,

into execution. But she was not called upon to repent of her act. God is very kind to the charitable. During the whole course of Eytmin's malady, Barberine was constantly in his room, breathing the tainted air. Leszek's intentions were of the best. He executed the orders of the physician to the very letter, but the poor man was totally devoid of that divine quality which enables a nurse to anticipate the wishes of an invalid. He knew nothing of those thousand ingenious devices which women know by instinct, and which soothe pain and assist to pass the weary hours away.

Had Barberine been a Sister of Charity she could have done no more for Eytmin, except that she could not always linger at his side, for the duties of her profession were onerous. Every moment she could spare from these were consecrated to her servant.

Typhus fever is a most terrible disease. The delirium which accompanies and characterizes it is most peculiar in its character, and begins in the earliest stage of the disease, often, however, in so mild a form that it is not suspected by either the patient or those about him. And later in the malady, even when the invalid appears to be in the full possession of his senses, his words are not to be trusted. He speaks of past events, and of persons whom he has known, but none of his words must be accepted as truths.

Barberine, in those rare moments when she remained alone with Eytmin, for his uncle occasionally took advantage of her presence to go out for a breath

of fresh air, often knew that her patient was talking, but it was in such a low voice, and in so hoarse a whisper, that she did not understand what he said. The physician had told her, too, not to pay any attention to his words, as they were those of delirium.

One morning, however, as she sat by the head of his bed, she fancied that amid the incoherencies she could distinguish her husband's name, and she mechanically listened; but there was little connection in Eytmin's words. All that Barberine could grasp was that the valet felt himself aggrieved by his master, and that he called him a traitor. He accused the Vicomte of deceiving his wife, and made many allusions to a garden, and to a conversation he had heard there between two persons.

Leszek coming in at this moment, Barberine hurried away to the theater; but Eytmin's words still echoed in her ear, and, as she remembered the long absences of her husband, she began to feel more than one doubt. To interrogate Saint Bertrand was useless, as she well knew. She determined to await Eytmin's restoration to health; for the physician had that morning told her he was mending rapidly. But while awaiting the time when she might cross-examine Eytmin, she determined to watch every word that fell from his lips; but from that day, Eytmin talked only of Siberia, of a revolt, and of some man who had sold his brothers, but the name of this man he never pronounced.

When Eytmin, after going through all the vari-

ous phases of his malady, began to be conscious of what was going on about him, he was greatly astonished to see his mistress preparing his *tisane* and arranging his pillows with all a sister's assiduity. He lay wondering at this, but was too weak to ask a question. In a day or two, as he regained his strength and recognized his uncle and Monsieur Tiphaine, he asked them the meaning of this, and they told him that his mistress had done the same from the beginning of his illness, and that he would be the most ungrateful creature in the world if he ever forgot her goodness. Barberine entered just as Eytmin was hearing these words. He gazed at her earnestly, but he could not thank her, for his emotion rendered him speechless. As his mistress approached his bed to ask if he felt better, he could not restrain his tears, and Barberine, knowing their source, felt herself repaid for all she had done.

She had not, however, forgotten the resolution she had taken in regard to the words he had dropped in his delirium.

Eight days later, Eytmin rose from his bed, and Barberine was alone with him for an hour. Leszek had returned the previous evening to the house of his master, Monsieur Tiphaine. She asked him abruptly why he disliked his master. Eytmin, at this unexpected question, turned pale; but controlling further evidence of emotion, he stammered :

“‘Dislike my master,’ did you say, madame?”

“Yes; that was what I said, Eytmin; and why did you accuse him of deceiving me?”

Eytmin felt that his secret was his no longer. He had no intention, however, of afflicting his mistress by revealing to her the infidelity of the Vicomte, or allowing her to guess at his own projects of revenge.

Barberine repeated, word for word, all that he had uttered in his delirium.

"I don't in the least understand," said Eytmin. "I never have taken any part in any insurrection. I know no traitor, I have nothing and no one to avenge. As to Monsieur, I am unaware of any want of fidelity on his part toward Madame. Such matters do not concern a domestic like myself."

Barberine's heart was by no means lightened, nor were her doubts removed by these words. She resolved to say nothing to her husband, lest he should be prejudiced against his valet; but with a fear that she could not define and was eager to dissipate, she said, after a brief silence:

"I wish to believe what you say, and am ready to attribute your fierce words to the hallucinations of fancy. I shall say no more to you on the subject. I wish you, however, to try and love my husband as much as you do me, or even more; for to think ill of him, is to do me a cruel harm. The greatest proof of gratitude you can give me, is to attach yourself with all fidelity to the interests of your master. Now, Eytmin, you are not to watch him. If he deceives me, I do not wish to know it. Do you understand?"

She went out as she spoke these words, leaving

the poor fellow overwhelmed with fear and forebodings of evil. When she was gone, he sat for some minutes; then shook his head and drew a long breath, finally he rose with difficulty and tottered to a chair on which stood his valise. He hunted through it until he found his knife, and opening it he examined the shining blade, and tested its point by sticking it against the wall; then cried aloud as he dropped it: "And now he is sacred! I must not touch him!"

CHAPTER XXII.

"RETALIATION."

It was a sense of her own dignity that impelled Barberine to speak as she had done to Eytmin. She was not duped by her servant's denials. She felt that her husband was deceiving her, but she did not choose that any third person should come between them, even in her defense.

She suffered cruelly, however, from an infidelity that was daily growing more conspicuous. Not only did Saint Bertrand neglect her now, but she actually saw him only rarely, and for brief intervals. He spent all his evenings with the Princess, and came home late at night.

Barberine was, at first, in her great indignation, tempted to ask the meaning of his conduct. But she reflected that were she to do so, he would certainly leave her, if she harassed him with reproaches, and did not accommodate herself to his infidelities. She reminded herself that they would, in a few months, leave Russia forever. Their departure would, of course, terminate any *liaison* that her husband had contracted, probably through want of something to do. It was impossible that this woman, who had captivated him, whomsoever she

might be, whose very name she, in her exaggerated pride, refused to learn, would follow them into France. She, therefore, bore her jealousy in sad patience, as best she might, and avoided every thing which might tempt her to allude to the discovery she had made. She was colder and more reserved than usual, and to Bertrand's eyes appeared to suspect nothing, and to make the best of a position she could not modify.

The Vicomte was, in reality, delighted with his wife's attitude. She had conformed precisely to his wishes. So long as his relations with Méléline could be kept secret, he was quite determined not to leave Barberine, not being inclined, as he said to himself, to drop the substance for the shadow.

La Méléline began by teasing him. She made a few sharp jests on the subject of conjugal duties, and asked if he did not think the time had arrived for him to leave his ballet dancer, and sometimes told him that Barberine allowed him such entire liberty that it would be very ungrateful to desert her!

But all this was in the past. Now, she said not one word of Barberine, thinking that her lover ought not to allow her to express a wish more than once. When allusions to the past were made by him, she was coldness itself. This coldness exasperated, while at the same time, it attracted him toward her. Meeting, for the first time in his life, a woman who ventured to tell him the cruelest truths, he arrived at the conclusion that he had found some one stronger

than himself—some one who would rule him—and thus compel him to expiate the evil he had done to others.

And now, let my readers explain for themselves the truths I am about to lay before them. He thought La Mélédine ugly, as she really was; she was excessively thin, her complexion dark and muddy, her ears were large and set out from her head, while all this, and her purplish lips, made her at times, particularly in the morning, almost hideous. She constantly wounded Saint Bertrand's vanity, and offended his tastes as well as his instincts. She set his nerves on edge like acid fruits, and when she looked him full in the face with her insolent eyes, it seemed to him that he must strangle her then and there. She rarely opened her mouth except to launch at him some biting sarcasm, or some airy bit of hatefulness. She amused herself by doing precisely those things which were most disagreeable to him; for example, she deluged herself with musk from head to foot, and it made him deadly ill to be near her. Each evening when he left her, after being insulted, mortified, and tormented, he called her, in his heart, a Medusa and a fiend, and swore, under his breath, that never would he see her again.

But the next day, no sooner was he awake, than his first thought was to hurry to her, and undergo new agonies. She overlooked none of his shortcomings, and seemed to delight in humiliating him before her circle of intimates. Saint Bertrand sub-

mitted humbly to all this woman's caprices ; until now he had known nothing of that emotion which is as much anger as love, disgust as desire ; and if formerly he had been told that it would ever be his lot to experience these unnatural joys, and these despairs ceaselessly renewed, he would have laughed at the very idea. He had once had a real passion for Barberine, as well as for Wanda, and probably for many another woman, but that passion in no degree resembled the diabolical possession which held him, body and soul, and left him neither peace nor rest.

He often asked himself if madness would not be the result of this adventure ; if, indeed, he were not mad already ; if the atmosphere in which he spent so much of his time were not poisoned, and had not affected his brain, intoxicating him, and causing him to perish slowly by a mysterious and nameless malady ; and at this atrocious idea he felt a thrill of horror. Never, in all the horrible time of miserable poverty from which Barberine had taken him, had his suffering been as acute as now. Barberine was well avenged.

She, however, took no advantage of her husband's despair, which she had readily discovered, but knowing not to what cause to attribute it, concluded that her suspicions had been correct, and that Saint Bertrand was hopelessly in love with some woman. She was tempted to question him, with the hope of recalling him to his duty ; but feared to irritate him by letting him see that she suspected his mis-

adventure. She was, therefore, an apparently impassive looker-on at his moods of sullen rage, and the sadder he was, the more reassured did she become.

One day, all her terrors returned. It seemed to her that her husband looked less despondent, as was in truth the case, for Saint Bertrand had found, or fancied he had found, a way of momentarily stifling his pain.

La Méléline received a large and fashionable circle in Moscow. In the morning her guests were mostly the political men of the city, with the most influential of whom she had long and earnest discussions.

The Russians at this time had received grave checks in the Caucasus, and these defeats, as they might almost be called, were as unexpected as they were mortifying, and occupied the thoughts and were the endless theme of conversation throughout all Russia.

In the evening the Princess laid aside politics, and sought to amuse herself by assembling about her a set of young and wealthy men. Saint Bertrand was of course, a regular *habitué* of her house, which seemed to him a bit of Paris. The guests sat long over the dinner table, and when they were sufficiently excited, the guests passed the rest of the night, as is the custom in Russia, over the card-tables. Saint Bertrand was at first faithful to the promise that he had made himself—never to touch a card—and looked on at the game. But one night

Méledine asked why he did not play, and reminded him of his passion for *trente et quarente* at Baden. A feeling of false shame prevented Saint Bertrand from confessing the true reason of his refusal to play, and he answered that he no longer cared for cards; whereupon, all the assemblage cried out. The Princess laughed at him, and told him that he was afraid of his wife's displeasure, and declared that she led him by the nose. Finally she said so much that Saint Bertrand thought it impossible to refuse any longer. He was in mortal terror of losing, but he won. He played on with the feeling that his luck would presently turn; but he continued to win. Never had fortune so favored him. The next day he found himself richer by a thousand francs, and the Princess was highly gratified, for the passion which could assist her in ruling her lover, had regained dominion over him.

From that night Saint Bertrand found life more endurable; not only had he found an amusement, but he also won a good deal of money. Besides, when he was playing, he thought no more of Méledine, nor did he listen to her biting words, but shook his head and played on. By degrees she became less exasperating to him, and he was rendered so amiable by his accession of wealth, that he even began to think her sharp speeches the result of her ill health. Each bank-note he pocketed under her roof gave her some new grace or agreeable quality, and he ended by winning a hundred thousand francs from her guests! He could certainly have thought

her superior to every other woman in the world. Unfortunately the good luck of the Vicomte was not to endure forever. He began to lose small sums, and, growing obstinate, went on until, at the end of a fortnight, he had lost all he had won. He wished to stop then, but La Mélédine dissuaded him.

"Ah!" she said, with contempt, "if you were to lose all you have, or even should chance to run in debt, it strikes me that it would not be such a great misfortune."

He knew to the contrary, however, and was about to tell her so; but she cut him short.

"Have you not your wife?" she exclaimed, scoffingly. "Does she not coin gold for you with her pirouettes and twining arms? What does it matter then what you lose here?"

He had endured too much poverty, not to dread a repetition. He, nevertheless, continued to play, and soon lost every sou he had in the world. He believed when every thing was gone that Mélédine would come to his assistance; but he was egregiously mistaken. She seemed absorbed in the events going on in the Caucasus. One morning when Saint Bertrand was deploring his fate, she intentionally remarked:

"Money badly got never stays in one's purse!"

This was the extent of the interest she testified. Saint Bertrand had no more money now, and adopted the expedient of going to the theater each night that his wife danced, and giving his receipt for the amount due to her for each representation, so that

when Barberine went on to the stage her salary for that night was not only paid to her husband, but staked and lost at the gambling table.

This went on to the end of their sojourn at Moscow. Meanwhile, Eytmin was aware of all that had occurred to his master; for while the Vicomte was in the *salon* of the Princess, the valet waited in the anteroom among the other servants, where all talked over the stakes at the gaming-table. Eytmin soon learned that Saint Bertrand was ruined, or nearly so; but he said nothing of it to his mistress, or indeed to any one. Barberine had forbidden him to speak of his master, or to tell her any thing of his movements; he, therefore, contented himself by watching the Vicomte's every act, for he had a conviction that this man who had already committed such crimes would some day find another victim in his wife; and this, Eytmin was determined to prevent.

Barberine had been secretly warned by Monsieur Tiphaine that Saint Bertrand had drawn heavily upon him, and began to lose much of her serenity. Tears were in her eyes the greater part of the time, and she forgot her determination to hear or see nothing, and also the command she had imposed upon Eytmin.

One morning while Saint Bertrand was still asleep, she sent for her servant, and, ignoring her repugnance to question him about his master's acts, she said quietly:

"You always go out with your master in the evening, do you not?"

"Yes, madame."

"And where does he go?"

Eytmin looked at her in astonishment, and stammered:

"You forbade me to speak of that, madame."

"And I bid you do so now."

"Very well, then. He always goes to the same place — Faubourg de la Porte Rouge."

The miserable wife was mad to ask the name of the lady who lived in that house, but she dared not. Had Eytmin been of her own sex, she would have surmounted her repugnance.

"What does he do in this place?"

"I do not know."

"Does he play?"

"I think so."

"And he has been losing?"

"So I am told."

Barberine started to her feet, and began to pace the room. Her future looked dark enough to her, with a husband who divided his time between some unknown beauty and the gambling-table. She reproached herself for her inaction and her resignation, and determined to bring to a close a state of things which was leading them on the straight road to ruin.

"What is the name of this woman?" she asked suddenly.

Eytmin hesitated, and then answered resolutely:

"She is called the Princess Méléline."

On hearing this name, Barberine threw up her arms in terror.

"It is she!" she cried, "she who is the bane of my existence! It was she who ruined my happiness at Baden. Why does this fearful woman fasten herself upon him like a vampire?"

She dismissed Eytmin, and hastily made her toilette. When Saint Bertrand appeared, she reproached him for his infidelity, and threw the name of his mistress in his face. Carried away by anger, she declared that Méléline had received him again, only that she might once more throw him aside, and mortify him. Saint Bertrand denied every thing; but Barberine's reproaches were so bitter that he, in his turn, allowed himself to be carried away by anger; and Eytmin, in the anteroom where he was stationed, heard the furious language. He also heard Barberine's sobs, and suddenly a sharp scream from her, and a heavy fall. Eytmin did not hesitate a moment. He rushed into the room, and saw Barberine prone upon the floor, while the Vicomte, livid with passion, stood over her with a footstool raised, as if about to crush out her brains. Hearing the door open, he turned, and the footstool fell from his hands.

Eytmin stood on the threshold, apparently very calm, but in reality boiling with indignation. In his eyes there was a threat.

"Did you ring, sir?" he asked.

Saint Bertrand, as he looked at this young giant, felt instinctively that he would never again allow

him to strike his wife. He was possibly a little ashamed of himself. He raised Barberine from the ground, saying sulkily as he did so :

"No, I did not ring;" and then turning away, left the room.

Eytmin began to arrange the furniture, which was in great disorder; but when his master's steps were lost in the distance, he said to Barberine, softly :

"Madame, pray do not think of going to see the Princess. It will do no good."

Barberine was sobbing convulsively, with her face buried in the cushions of her chair.

"Why do you not go back to France, madame? Make up your mind to do this at once, and I will watch over you until you leave Russia, and afterward, too, as long as you will keep me, I assure you that nothing shall happen to you.

Barberine thanked her faithful servant, but said although she was very unhappy, she had no fears. Alas! it was not a month before the unhappy woman was woefully undeceived.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ROGATCHEF LOSES HIS TIMIDITY.

Barberine, since her arrival in Moscow, had been surrounded by the idle young men of the town. Supposing at first that she was like most of the women of her profession, they did their best to please her. But Barberine, who thoroughly understood such attentions, and knew that men in proffering them expect some recompense in return, would accept nothing from her admirers, and declared she had no time for the amusements they proffered. These denials were at first regarded as coquetries; but when, at the end of a few months, her regular, well-ordered life had demonstrated her sincerity to the least credulous, she was scoffed at as having no sense, or judgment; and by degrees the *habitués* of the theater at Moscow did as had been done in Paris, they ceased to take any notice of her.

Young men, with rare exceptions, are pretty much alike all over the world. They feel as if they had no time to waste, and prefer tangible realities; for they know that life is short!

There was one among those in Moscow, however, who was an exception to the others, and was faithful to Barberine. He had known her a long time,

and had watched the inflexibility of her conduct. This man was the young Prince de Rogatchef, who was called "the little Prince," to distinguish him from his uncle, the Military Governor of Varsovie. The little Prince had known Barberine at Baden, and then at Paris, and had paid his court to her in both places. He attributed his ill success, not to her nature, but to his lack of power to touch her heart. He adopted, therefore, a new policy, and ceased to make any direct attack upon her. He never sneered at her principles, but continued to call on her daily, while his manner was friendly and sympathetic.

Barberine received him cordially, but determined that he should never have an opportunity of renewing his suit. As each of them had an *arrière-pensée*, there was necessarily a little restraint in their intercourse. Barberine talked of her art, of her rôles, and of her new acquaintances at the theater. Rogatchef, in his turn, talked of the wearisomeness of life; of the impossibility of ever obtaining what one wants in this world; of the misanthropy into which one gradually sinks, not from satiety, but from privations. Barberine invariably told him that life was not worth the trouble it cost her to live. She was thinking of her husband's infidelity as she spoke, as did the Prince of his own hopes, while he deplored the miseries of his existence. He met Saint Bertrand meanwhile, almost every evening, at the house of the Princess; but he never mentioned her name to Barberine. He was dignified and reserved, and Barberine, by whom this line of conduct was per-

fectly unsuspected, ended by feeling somewhat piqued.

She was tormented, moreover, by a woman's curiosity. She had constantly on her lips a crowd of questions in regard to her husband and his conduct, and when the Prince was at her side he was so indifferent and cold that she became vexed with him, for she knew his silence to be intentional, for her husband's infidelity was patent to all the world.

A fortnight had elapsed since the painful scene we have described between Barberine and her husband, and in that time they, by mutual agreement, had not addressed a word to each other. At the end of this time, Rogatchef came, one afternoon, to call on Barberine, who had danced for the last time in Moscow, and was to return to France the following week. The "little Prince," whose natural timidity had somewhat worn off by his intercourse with the world, was in somewhat of a mocking mood. He began to complain, as usual, of the manner in which he was used; and then, noticing that Barberine was unusually silent, he asked, with an apparent lack of sympathy that amounted almost to rudeness, "if he did not weary her?"

Barberine turned her astonished eyes upon him.

"No, Prince," she said, "you never weary me."

"But you have a pre-occupied air, to-day."

"Yes," answered his companion, sadly, "I am pre-occupied, because I am unhappy."

She hoped that these words would touch him, and elicit some mark of interest and sympathy.

"Indeed!" he exclaimed, "you are unhappy too, are you? But it won't last with you, for you are so philosophical and wise. But with me it is different; and how shall I console myself!"

"Console yourself!" repeated Barberine. "You have youth, fortune, and liberty! What do you lack?"

"As to my youth," answered Rogatchef, with a smile, as he crossed his slender legs, "that is gradually passing away; and as to my fortune, pray tell me what use it is to me."

"What do you wish more?"

"Ah! that I can not tell you; however, I do want one thing, without which life is intolerable to me. But you have not told me, yet, the cause of your own grief," he continued, with affected indifference.

But Barberine, wounded by the manner of the Prince, was not disposed to further confidences.

"We all have our secrets," she answered; "and like yourself, Prince, I shall keep my own."

"Very well; but are you vexed with me? Suppose, however, that I know these secrets of yours—what then? Shall I tell them to you?"

"If you will."

"Are you willing?"

"Most certainly."

"Well, then," answered Rogatchef, with an hypocritical smile, "you are annoyed at not having had the success you anticipated in Moscow."

Barberine was thunderstruck at his assurance.

"You are mistaken," she said, as soon as she could recover herself; "the public of Moscow have have been all that I could ask. I do not suffer from wounded vanity, I assure you."

"And from what, then?" asked Rogatchef, with a faint touch of sympathy in his voice.

Hot tears filled Barberine's eyes; and had the Prince said one other word, she would have told him all. But he was silent, and she could only sigh.

After a moment or two he continued, with all the cruelty of a Tartar:

"Do you wish me to suppose your sorrow to be one of the heart? Do you mean that you are thinking of some one who is indifferent to you?"

Barberine answered indignantly.

"What right have you to give so strange an interpretation to my words? Who has told you, or implied, that I love any one? And who, pray, is this person supposed to be?"

"Tut! tut! my child," answered Rogatchef; "don't fly out at me in that way! It was I, alone, who ventured upon the conclusion that a heart-sorrow indicated a lover in the background."

"And why not a husband?" asked the lady. She thought that these words would induce him to speak with more frankness.

"To be sure!" he said, shrugging his shoulders. "I remember that I heard, not very long ago, that you repented of your marriage; and I can only say,

if you are not happy, you have only yourself to thank. Should a *danseuse* ever marry? Should a woman like yourself profane with household cares her sylphide wings? Such things do not assimilate. I foresaw all that has happened. With your fine principles you have marred your life; you have driven away all your admirers; and you are unhappy with your husband. That is the whole story."

Barberine had no reply to make.

"And now tell me your troubles," said Rogatchef.

She sat mute and absorbed.

"But why do I ask?" he continued, shrugging his shoulders. "Are not married men always the same?"

Still she did not reply.

"And what now do you propose to do?" he asked. "The greatest follies may sometimes be repaired, if one is so disposed."

"I hope," answered Barberine, "that my husband will realize what he is doing, and that when we return to Paris he will repent of this last crisis in his life."

"Well! well!" said Rogatchef, "this is certainly a most excellent joke! Upon my life, women do not deserve to be pitied. Here you are, taught by experience, recognizing the faults committed toward you, and instead of thinking of yourself, and of where you shall take refuge from your present woes, you simply contemplate continuing in the same path. Have you not been unhappy enough? Are

you not yet tired of your Saint Bertrand? What the deuce is there in this fellow which causes him to be adored by all the women, as he is?"

Barberine meditated.

"What would you counsel me to do?" she asked, at length.

"Can you ask?" he replied. "You are miserable in your marriage—break it, then."

"Never!" cried Barberine, energetically. "Besides, you know that were I so inclined, I could not do it."

"And why, pray? If a man behaves badly towards his wife she can always leave him, I suppose."

"No! no!" she answered sadly, "that I would never do."

"Then I have no compassion for you."

"So be it—I have none for myself."

Rogatchef began to be angry at this obstinacy.

"Do you know," he asked, "what will happen to you, with your preposterous ideas? Saint Bertrand will turn around and leave you, one of these fine days."

"Leave me!" she cried; "and why should you think that?"

"Merely because I know the man thoroughly. The very moment when Saint Bertrand believes it to be to his interest to abandon you, he will not hesitate to do so."

"Do you intend to imply," asked Barberine, "that this day has now come?"

"I know nothing about that, but I assure you it

is a mere question of time ; and then, what will you do ? ”

“ Ah, me ! ” she cried, wringing her hands, “ what can I do now ? If it is God’s will that my husband shall desert me, I can only submit.”

“ Then cheer up, for Saint Bertrand is not worth a pang. Take my advice ; do not wait until he has wasted all you have earned, humiliated and deceived you still more than he has already done. Take the initiative yourself. You are young and very charming ; your talents are great. Surely, in these facts you can find consolation. Every body sympathizes with you, and, if you choose, you can avenge yourself upon him now to your heart’s content.”

He had at last reached the point which had been his aim ever since the *liaison* of the Princess and Saint Bertrand began. As Barberine made no reply, he thought he had won his cause, and, softening his voice, went on to speak of his ardent affection for her, of his devotion, and of his desire to tear her from this fellow who was so utterly unworthy of her. While in the midst of this harangue, the sound of the door bell was heard, and Eytmin appeared to announce a visitor to his mistress.

This visitor was the Chevalier Florimond de Belassèse, the father of Saint Bertrand. He had come from St. Petersburg as bearer of dispatches from the French minister, whose permission he had obtained to make a little *détour* for the purpose of seeing his son and Barberine before he returned to Paris. The worthy man was smiling and amiable ;

his costume was, as usual, very old-fashioned, and he had aged considerably.

Barberine received him cordially, for the old gentleman had shown her great affection at the time of her marriage. He took her in his arms and kissed her affectionately, and then made a ceremonious bow to the little Prince.

The latter gentleman was considerably annoyed at this unexpected intrusion upon his *tête-à-tête* with Barberine, in whom, moreover, he detected no intention of sending away the new comer. He sat, therefore, in austere silence; but when he heard the Chevalier, after assuring Barberine that he had come to Moscow only to see her, go on to speak of her husband as if he thought him a model of conjugal virtues, and as if he believed her to be the happiest of wives, the Prince could not conceal a smile. Barberine looked at him with reproof. She did not choose to hear any further criticisms on her husband's conduct.

Rogatchef saw he had wounded her, and that he had lost the opportunity—for that day, at least—of inculcating further counsels. He, therefore, arose and took his departure.

When he had gone, Florimond asked more pointed questions about his son, and particularly where he was at that hour. Barberine told him he was paying visits, and was tempted to open her heart to the old gentleman, so great was the need she felt at that moment for sympathy and advice. But she hesitated, for the old gentleman seemed to

be so happy in the idea that his son had reformed and was sincerely attached to his wife, that she was unwilling to pain him, and to mar in the very beginning the joy he felt in the prospect of seeing his son.

"It will do to-morrow," she said to herself. She was strengthened by feeling that some one who had her interests at heart was at her side. Her father-in-law could aid her with advice, and assist her in a hundred ways. She compelled him to remain to dinner.

But as they took their seats at the table, the Chevalier, seeing that Saint Bertrand was evidently not expected, again manifested great astonishment at his absence.

"Do you mean," he exclaimed, "that if I had not come in you would have dined alone to-day? That is a cruel thing for a young husband to do."

Barberine did not say that for some time past it had been her daily habit to dine alone.

"I think he has been detained," she stammered.

Eytmin was waiting with his usual phlegm, but nothing that passed between this elderly stranger and his mistress escaped him.

"When do you think of leaving Moscow, my dear?" he asked.

"In about a week," was Barberine's answer.

"I wish you would go with me," continued the Chevalier. "I am traveling in an ancient, but most comfortable berlin, which will contain three persons with ease. If you have a servant, he can go

on the box ; and as I have little or no baggage, I have all the more room for yours. What do you say ?”

“I accept with all my heart,” was Barberine’s reply — her heart giving, as she spoke, a great throb of thankfulness.

“All right, then ! It is all settled. I am at the *Allemagne*, directly opposite you. I am ready to go at an hour’s notice, on any day most agreeable to yourself. I only want time to procure horses.”

“We will not detain you long in Moscow, I assure you, and to-morrow I will request my husband to see about our passports.

“Your passports ? and why, pray ?” rejoined the Chevalier. “I am traveling, madame, as a courier of the French Embassy. As such I represent France wherever I go. My person is as inviolable as my luggage, as are any friends, relatives, or servants, whom I may see fit to take with me.”

Eytmin was polishing a plate, and as he heard these words he looked at the Chevalier.

“Good !” he said to himself ; “unless I am greatly mistaken, madame will want this old gentleman’s assistance before many days have passed.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CONSPIRACY.

This same day that we have seen the Chevalier Florimond dining *en tête-à-tête* with Barberine, had been selected by Saint Bertrand for an explanation with the Princess. He dined with her, as my readers have inferred, and had contrived that no other guest should be asked with him.

The repast did not last more than a half hour. Saint Bertrand had little or no appetite, and Mélé-dine could not eat, for she was absorbed in thinking of a long conference she had had with one of her secret allies that morning. The man had just arrived from the Caucasus, leaving that province in full revolt.

Coffee was served in the boudoir. The Princess sat rolling her cigarette between her fingers, while Saint Bertrand, with his eyes fixed on the cup smoking before him, sat in moody silence.

Finally the Princess, who had been wrapt in thought, raised her head, and looking full in her lover's face, at once saw that he was making up his mind to make some request, which he regarded as hazardous.

"Will you not take a glass of absinthe?" she

asked with a smile of contempt. "It may, perhaps, loosen your tongue a little."

He smiled bitterly and obeyed. The absinthe burned his throat. He felt a delicious sense of warmth, and drew a long breath; then, as he placed his glass upon the table, he turned to the Princess, and said:

"Why do you treat me as you do?"

"Treat you as I do?" she replied, lighting her cigarette. "Explain yourself, if you please."

"You mortify me constantly in the presence of your friends."

"What could you expect? It is not a revelation to you that I am a most unamiable woman. You have long known it, and must take your share."

"So I may, of your ill temper; but not of your evil acts."

"And what crime, pray, have I committed?"

"You knew that once before in my life I had been ruined by play, and forswore cards. But you did and said so much that I was obliged to yield; and now, thanks to you, I am bankrupt."

"Pshaw! you do not really mean it?"

"Indeed, I do."

She reflected a little, and then said with a smile:

"Why did you listen to me, then?"

"This is a strange consolation for you to offer."

"What else can I say?"

He ground his teeth in sullen rage. He saw that she was determined that he should apply to her in so

many words for assistance, merely that she might have the pleasure of refusing.

"You are really a most excellent woman," he said bitterly.

She tossed her cigarette away, and placing her two hands on the arms of her chair, she said to him:

"Why should I be especially kind to you? To whom have you ever been good and merciful? I think it most extraordinary that you should venture to complain."

"Go on! go on!" said Saint Bertrand. "I am quite accustomed to your compliments."

"The truth is," resumed La Méléline, "I see you have formed a very false idea of me. Because I came here in search of you after I drove you from me in Paris, you took it into your head that I adored you, and that I could not live without you. But you are very much mistaken, my friend!"

"Why on earth, then, did you give yourself to me?" he asked.

"I am sure I can't tell," said La Méléline, with a weary sigh and shrug of her shoulders; "from curiosity, perhaps!"

"Thanks for the compliment!" said Saint Bertrand; "but when your curiosity was satisfied, might I ask why you retained me at your side? Why did you not close your door to me?"

At this question La Méléline lifted her head and said loudly:

"Because, thanks to you, something powerful was awakened within me."

"And what might that be?" sneered the Vi-comte.

"A thirst for vengeance," she answered in a low, concentrated tone.

Saint Bertrand started up.

"Why do you talk to me of vengeance?" he said. "What have I done, that you should seek to be revenged upon me?"

"You have deceived me," answered the Princess. "I tested you at Baden, hoping that you would refuse to sell yourself; hoping that your pride was greater than your love of gain. I had hoped that in you I had found my ideal; but when I put you to the proof, I found only a shallow pretense of honor, and you yielded!"

"Have you lost your senses?" cried Saint Bertrand, stunned by the enormity of this reproach. "You took me, then, for a sort of Almanzor, and finding that I am a man much like other men, you now talk of avenging yourself on me."

"Precisely!"

"You are mad!"

"Very likely; but guard yourself well against my madness, for it was that which impelled me to ruin you for the second time. You are now without a sou, and absolutely dependent on your wife's arms and legs."

"Come, now, my dear Princess," said Saint Bertrand, with a spasmodic attempt at calmness; "all this is very dramatic; nicely imagined and worked out; but I have no idea that you are in earnest."

“Then permit me to observe that you are greatly mistaken. I do not doubt that you are greatly astonished at my conduct. I should be the same, were I in your place. It is a little droll, I admit, that a woman should allow herself to be loved by a man only for the pleasure of making him unhappy. I swear to you before God, however, that I rejoice in your misery, when I see your haughty eyes meeting mine with a pleading gaze. Ah! I see you pale under my insults. When you leave my presence, quivering with rage—and I know that you are trying to summon courage to leave me forever, and so end the persecution you suffer—when you pant like a lamb in the grasp of a panther, then, I say, I am filled with joy! Yes, nothing in the world pleases me so much as to witness your tortures. It seems to me that I am obeying a stronger will than my own; and that the evil I am guilty of toward you is only just and lawful; in short, I feel something of that satisfaction known to an executioner as he decapitates a criminal.”

Her voice dropped and she was silent. Saint Bertrand was looking at her with wild affrighted eyes.

“She is certainly mad,” he said to himself, “or I am fast becoming so myself.”

There was, in what she said, something which seemed true to him; but he shrank from examining into it. It seemed too horrible to him. With a violent effort he conquered this terror, and, turning to the Princess, said:

"What the deuce is the meaning of all this harangue?"

Had La Méléline spoken only to relieve a secret anger? and had her thoughts now gone back to the subject which had occupied her since the morning? who can tell? At all events, as Saint Bertrand finished speaking, she raised her eyes with an air of surprise, and then, as if weary of arguing, she raised her eyebrows, and then her shoulders.

He seated himself at her side, for he wished to soothe her.

"Do you know," he said, "that of all these things you have said, you do not believe one? I know that as well as you do; but why have you said them? Now, have I displeased you?"

She did not reply.

"No," he continued; "this is all folly. I can not believe that it gives you pleasure to injure me."

Still she did not answer.

"I am ruined," he continued — "ruined once more. This is only too true; and my ruin comes from having followed your advice. Surely this does not make you happy."

"It does," she cried, vehemently. "I would like you and your Barberine to end your days in the alms-house."

At hearing the name of his wife, the Vicomte shook his head.

"Ah, yes!" he said, "I see now. You are jealous, madame!"

A strange smile flitted over the lips of the Prin-

cess. Was she gratified that she was at last understood?

"What folly!" said Saint Bertrand. "Do you not know that I love only you?"

"I am told," she answered, "that your wife is going back to Paris in a week."

He admitted that fact.

"What will you do then?" asked the Princess.

"I do not understand your question."

"Shall you go to Paris with her, or will you remain with me?"

"I will do as you shall decide. But — will you not come to Paris?"

"No, I will not."

"And why?"

"Because."

"That is no reason at all."

"And I have none better to give."

He was silent.

"It is easy to see," she cried, angrily, "that you still love your wife!"

But it was not affection which caused Saint Bertrand to hesitate. He wished the Princess to explain herself more explicitly.

"You see, my dear," she said, "when a married man is stupid enough to contract a *liaison*, he must make up his mind to endure all the consequences. It does not suit me to continue relations in which circumstances combine to compel me to accept the second rôle."

At these words, Saint Bertrand turned very pale.

"You wish to leave me, then?" he faltered.

"That may be."

"Speak, if you please. What do you wish me to do?"

"I wish that you belong to me, or to your wife, exclusively."

"But," he answered, "if I sacrifice my duty to my passion, what guaranty have I that you will not make me repent my act?"

"That must depend entirely on yourself."

"What shall I do to please you?"

"Be docile and obedient."

"Have I not always been so? And with what result? Only just now you told me that nothing pleased you so much as to make me suffer."

"Well! let us drop that," she replied. "I lost my temper, and admit it frankly. Besides, for the last fortnight I have been overwhelmed with business cares. Let us say no more about it. And now, decide for yourself."

Saying to himself that a few words would bind him to nothing, he took her hand.

"It is easy for me to decide," he said. "You are to-day just what you have been, in my eyes, for years. Do you understand me? I will never leave you."

"Do you swear this?"

"I swear it."

"And you will never see your wife again?"

"Never."

"And to whatever place I may select to live — for it is probable that I shall be obliged to leave Paris forever — you will follow me?"

"I will follow you."

"And to whatever cause I may hereafter devote myself, you will promise also to espouse? You will obey me blindly, and expose your life, if need be, to aid in the triumph of that cause?"

"I do not know what you mean," answered Saint Bertrand, "but I abandon body and soul to you."

"That is well! I am disposed to believe you. And yet, you may conceal some *arrière pensée*. You must give me some proof of your frankness."

Saying this, she arose and opened an *escretoire*. "Sit there," she said, "I will dictate."

Saint Bertrand asked what she wished to do.

"You will know soon enough," she answered. "Write!"

He took his seat at the desk. She dictated the following words:

MY DEAR BARBERINE.—I must see you at once, and I can not come to you. Come as soon as possible, for the gravest matters are involved, and any delay on your part will compromise my liberty, and perhaps my life.

La Méléline leaned on his shoulder and watched his pen as it moved slowly over the paper.

When the letter was finished she bade him fold it, place it in an envelope, and address it. Then taking it in her hand, she rang the bell.

"What do you intend to do with that letter?" asked Saint Bertrand.

"You will see," answered La Mélédine; and then, after a brief pause, added: "I wish that the rupture between yourself and your wife shall be final, and that all shall end this night. I hate her."

A footman appeared.

"Is Monsieur de Saint Bertrand's valet in the ante-room?" asked the Princess.

"Yes, madame, he has just come."

"Tell him to take his master's carriage and carry this letter to his master's house. The person to whom it is addressed will come back with him."

The footman retired.

"Will you tell me now?" asked Saint Bertrand.

La Mélédine interrupted him.

"Your wife, from this moment, is no longer your wife. In future, you are never to pronounce her name in my presence."

"But this is absurd. You tell me never to see her again, and at the same time send for her to come to your house."

"And what of that?"

"Simply that I must see her here, of course. But what do you want of her?"

"Simpleton that you are!" answered the Princess. "We have something more important than to wait for her. Some one else will receive her."

CHAPTER XXV

THE SNARE.

At the moment that Eytmin, carrying his master's letter, presented himself before Barberine, the Chevalier Florimond was with her. Her sadness had awakened the suspicions of the old gentleman; he had questioned her, and after resisting his entreaties for some time, she acknowledged all; her husband's infidelity, the ruin that was impending, his ill treatment, and said the only time she felt safe was when her servant was present.

The good man was thunderstruck at this avowal. He resolved to wait for his son to come in, and then reproach him for his infamous conduct. He begged Barberine to be patient and resigned; he kissed her hands tenderly, and called Heaven to witness that whatever happened he should always look upon her as his daughter.

Eytmin's appearance interrupted his protestations. Barberine was much astonished to see her valet come in without his master, but, when she read the letter of which he was the bearer, she forgot all the wrongs her husband had committed toward her, and, trembling from head to foot, sank into a chair.

The Chevalier, who did not understand this emotion, snatched the letter from her hands, read it aloud, and began to tremble in his turn. Eytmin looked from one to the other.

At last Barberine regained her self-control sufficiently to question Eytmin, but he could tell her nothing, as he knew of no affair in which the life of his master or his liberty would be compromised. He seemed, however, to wish to say something, and looked uneasily from the Chevalier to his mistress.

Barberine perceived his embarrassment.

"I have no better friend in the world than this gentleman," she said to Eytmin. "You may speak as if we were alone."

Florimond turned hastily to the valet.

"You hear?" he said; "tell us all you know."

"I can't say, sir, just what took place to-night at Madame Mélédine's; but something odd has been going on for the last few days. I feel it, rather than know it. Men of strange appearance have been hanging about the house. Yesterday one of them stopped me, and asked if I were in the service of the Princess, and when I said no, he apologized, but did not go away, and I saw him again near there this morning; to-night, on my way here with my master's letter, I saw this same person talking on the corner of the street with a police officer. The servants, too, at the house, have not been quite like themselves lately; somehow, I fancy that they are plotting something among themselves. They

talk to each other in whispers, and I saw one of them watching his mistress with the most threatening face. I fancy it is some political plot. Poland, to be sure, is quiet enough, for she is nearly dead; but there is a revolt in Caucasus. Now, the Princess Méléline, it is said, was born there, and it may be that she is mixed up in some conspiracy. In that case, which side has she taken? That of her people, or of Russia? One thing I had nearly forgotten. Gugenheim, Madame Méléline's intendant, left her house very suddenly, a fortnight ago, for St. Petersburg, and no one knew the reason of this journey. In my opinion, if my master's liberty is threatened, my mistress ought to go to him at once, no matter what his treatment of her may have been. I will go with her and see that no harm comes to her. Nevertheless, as it is necessary to be prudent, and we are in a land where people daily commit, with impunity, the vilest acts, I should like, if madame permits, to give her a little advice."

"Go on," cried Barberine, "I have entire confidence in your judgment, and I know you will risk your life at any time to serve me."

"Yes, madame," answered Eytmin, "I would give my life for you, for I have not forgotten that I owe it to you."

"You are a good fellow," interrupted the Chevalier, "but we are in haste, and I should like to hear your advice."

"I was thinking, sir," said Eytmin, "that it is barely possible, after all, that this is a snare to in-

duce madame to enter a house where, of course, the mistress can not be kindly disposed toward her."

"A snare!" answered the Chevalier. "How can it be a snare with her husband there? Can you believe him capable of such an act?"

"But, sir," began Eytmin, hesitatingly.

Barberine's face was hidden in her hands.

"And if you think this possible," continued the Chevalier, "how can you advise her to put her neck in the noose in this way?"

"I advise her to do so, sir, because I may be mistaken, and my master may be really in danger. It may be that it is he who has fallen into a snare himself. Madame can not run any danger, for I will go with her and defend her."

"And what am I to do while you are gone?" asked the Chevalier.

"I think I heard you say, sir, that you required no passports to leave Moscow, and that you only needed to ask for post horses to have them."

"Precisely!"

"Very well then, sir. Have your post horses put into your berlin, and wait for madame at the corner of the street. If, as I think, we shall be compelled to leave Moscow to-night, Monsieur Tiphaine will send madame's trunks on to Paris after us. Besides, the trunks are not of as much importance as our liberty."

Barberine arose hastily.

"Let us go at once," she said.

They went out, the three together, the Chevalier

to his hotel, and Eytmin, placing his mistress in Saint Bertrand's phaeton, took up the reins and drove toward the Faubourg de la Porte Rouge.

The *Quartier* was deserted when they entered the street. Eytmin drove into the court-yard, and placed his horse against the wall, and then assisted Barberine to descend. There was but one footman in the hall. This man hastily started up as he saw Barberine, and bowing low, showed her through two *salons* into a boudoir.

Eytmin was left alone in the hall.

Barberine had regained her composure. She knew that she was now to face this woman who had robbed her of the affection of her husband, and she naturally wished to impress her with her dignity. But when she entered the boudoir, she was astonished to find no one there.

She stood waiting, with the expectation of seeing her husband or the Princess appear; but no one came. Five minutes elapsed, and then she seated herself, and put her hand over her eyes. At a slight noise she started, and turning around, found Rogat-chef at her side.

The little Prince was as smiling as possible. He seated himself close beside her, and taking her hand, said :

"Was I not right? You would not leave Saint Bertrand, and now he has left you."

Barberine started.

"You are jesting?" she exclaimed.

"Not in the least," answered her companion.
"I was never more serious."

Barberine said slowly:

"He wrote to me this very evening, and bade me hasten here at once, saying that his liberty and his life were threatened."

Rogatchef did not permit her to finish. He threw himself back in his chair, and broke into shouts of laughter.

"And you believed it!" he cried. "Well, you can calm your fears. He is, I assure you, in the best of spirits and in the best of company. He is, at this present moment, on his way to a certain château in the environs of Mojaïsk, and the letter which was sent you was merely to bring you here."

"Bring me here!" repeated Barberine — a cold chill striking at her heart — "and why, pray?"

The Prince continued to laugh.

"Merely to show you that he relinquished his place to me!"

Barberine had risen to her feet, and recoiled with a gesture of indignation — her whole air that of a queen insulted by her valet.

"You are a liar!" she cried.

The Prince was still seated, and laughing as if he would die.

"Good!" he exclaimed, "that is really a charming thing to say."

"Yes, I repeat it: You are a liar! My husband may have forgotten his duties; he may have deceived me; he may have lost at the card-table all

the money I earned; he may insult me and ill-treat me; all this he may do, but never—no, not even were he to tell me so himself—would I believe him capable of this infamy of which you accuse him! It is a lie! I say it is a lie!’

Rogatchef’s handsome eyes were filled with an insolent admiration which he made no attempt to conceal. The insulting words she hurled in his face left him perfectly calm.

“Well, my dear,” he said, “I am glad to find that you have so good an opinion of your husband; but I assure you that I have told you only the truth.”

“My husband is here,” answered Barberine. “I wish to see him—I will see him!” and she rushed toward the door; but Rogatchef caught her arm.

“Do be reasonable,” he said. “I have wounded your vanity and you are angry. I can readily understand that; but listen—you know me to be a man of honor, do you not? Very well; I give you my word that your husband has left Moscow with the Princess, and that the letter he sent you was only a ruse to bring you here, where he knew I was waiting for you, because I love you.”

Barberine threw herself on a sofa near the door. She was weeping bitterly.

“It is impossible,” she sobbed. “He could not do such a thing. He is not capable of such infamy!”

“He is capable of this, and more!” retorted Rogatchef. “He is capable of any thing when he

has no money, as you very well know. You ought to be thankful to be delivered from such a scamp. Now you are free! Do not weep, but laugh! I will promise to make you forget him."

These words aroused all Barberine's anger again.

"Do you think for a moment that I will consent to this? I detest you. You, and those like you, have tempted my husband to live a life for which he did not care. You and this Princess who have separated us, are, in my eyes, equally to blame. You are both thoroughly bad and unprincipled, and, rather than become yours, I would kill myself. Do you understand me now?"

Rogatchef, at these words, ceased to smile.

"Ah, my dear!" he cried, "if you take this tone, we certainly shall not be friends very long. You are not in France, where strange ideas of Liberty and Equality flourish. You are in Moscow, in a city where men of my rank do pretty much as they please; and you are also in a house of which I am the master. You will not leave it except with me, and when it pleases me to go myself—that is to say, when you have come to your senses. Now then," he added, "be amiable and submissive, and I will promise to forget all you have said."

But Barberine was not frightened by these threats. Wrapping her shawl about her, she quietly moved toward the door; Rogatchef reached it first, however.

"You shall not go!" he exclaimed, folding his arms and leaning against the door.

Barberine turned to the chimney, by the side of which hung the bell-rope.

"Ah! you are going to ring, are you?" sneered Rogatchef, as Barberine pulled it violently.

The door was suddenly opened, and the Prince was thrown forward some ten feet upon the carpet, and when he rose in a rage and turned to see who had thrown him down, he beheld Eytmin standing on the threshold, to all appearance calm and impassive.

Eytmin closed the door and advanced into the room. Without addressing either the Prince or his mistress, he went to the curtains and cut off the heavy cords. With these he turned toward the Prince, whom he threw upon the floor. In vain did Rogatchef struggle. He felt that the grasp was absolutely inflexible.

"Help!" he cried. "Help! Do you intend to assassinate me? Barberine, bid this madman release me, and you shall go where you please!"

Barberine stood, looking at the Prince with a strange, fixed gaze.

"Do not hurt him," she said softly to Eytmin.

"No, madame, I will not hurt him," answered the valet; "but for your sake, I intend to prevent this young gentleman from going in pursuit of you for some days." And he tied the feet and arms of the Prince with the curtain cords. Presently he added: "I have done just the same to the fool who was left alone here in the house; for it seems that every body left while I took you that cursed letter.

The fool was asleep in the hall. I quietly tied and gagged him, and laid him away under the stairs ; and as you, my dear Prince, will not be able to release him, my opinion is that he will stay there some time ! Fortunately, I came to this door, and listened to what was going on in here. Now, my good sir, will you kindly tell me in which of your pockets I may hope to find your handkerchief ? ”

“ Do you intend to strangle me ? ” howled Rogatchef.

“ No ! my Prince, by no means—I merely wish to place it in your mouth, in order that your cries may not attract the police. ”

Eytmin as he spoke had found the handkerchief. He pressed it together until it was about as large as a child’s fist, and then placed it in the mouth of the Prince, holding it there by a cord which he tied at the back of his head.

When Rogatchef was reduced to this state of helplessness, Eytmin lifted him in his arms and laid him on the sofa ; then, turning toward his mistress, he said :

“ We have not a moment to lose, madame. ”

Barberine, without once looking at Rogatchef, went swiftly through the suite of apartments and out into the courtyard. Saint Bertrand’s phaeton was still standing there, and his horse impatiently pawed the ground.

“ Poor fellow ! ” said Eytmin, “ I can not stop to take him out of the harness. He must suffer for his master’s faults. ”

Eytmin closed the gates of the courtyard, leaving the mansion apparently deserted. Twenty steps down the street he saw a large berlin, with three horses, drawn up at the side. A man's head was protruded through the window. It was that of the Chevalier Florimond.

"Quick!" he cried, as he beheld Barberine, "jump in quick! Where is your husband? Was his life threatened? Tell me at least that much now!"

"He is safe," murmured Barberine; "but he is forever lost to me!"

She sank into a corner of the carriage, and Eytmin jumped upon the box. The coachman gathered up the reins, and when he heard the carriage-door shut, he said to the valet, as he raised his whip:

"Where shall I go?"

"To France," was Eytmin's reply.

CHAPTER XXVI.

EXPIATION.

At the very moment when Barberine had escaped from the hands of the Prince Rogatchef, her husband and the Princess Méléline were in a carriage going at full speed toward the château where they were to spend the night. When Saint Bertrand learned in what way his mistress intended to separate him from his wife, he quietly accepted the situation. In his opinion Barberine ought to be very thankful to be released from him, and felt not the smallest remorse at handing her over to Rogatchef; but he was uneasy as he looked at Méléline, who was half lying among the cushions at his side. She struck him as more odd than usual. He had suffered so often for her caprices, that he did not feel by any means certain of her now. Was it not her vanity and her pride, rather than her heart, that had induced her to separate him in this way from his wife?

He could not decide. Their *tête-à-tête* had lasted more than an hour without the exchange of a word between them. One of them was calculating the probable result of his infamous act; the other was absorbed in somber thoughts, and an expression of

intense bitterness was upon her lips. The truth was that Mélédine at Baden had conceived a violent passion for Saint Bertrand, and when she proposed to him that he should sell Wanda's papers, it was with the secret hope that he would emerge unspotted from this test. Exasperated by his disloyalty, she had driven him from her in her first impulse of indignation; then, regretting the precipitation of her conduct, she followed him to Moscow, with the hope that he would abandon his wife to follow her. La Mélédine was one of those complex natures which, while they do evil, are yet irresistibly drawn toward good. She was always doing acts of which she was afterward heartily ashamed, and was in eager pursuit of something heroic and elevated enough to raise her in her own eyes.

Unfortunately, Fate had placed her in the hands of a government to whom pity is unknown, and La Mélédine saw herself compelled to assist in cruelties without number. But while obeying her masters' bidding, she dwelt on the hope of a day coming at last, when she could revenge herself on them for their tyranny. The revolt in Caucasus seemed to her the occasion for which she had so longed, and to which she had looked forward, as an opportunity of liberating herself, while at the same time avenging the wrongs she had so long suffered. She confided her plans to no one. The Czar had ordered her to go to Caucasus, to seduce or buy certain rebellious chiefs whom it was supposed she could influence. She did not refuse this new mission, but she sent Gujenheim

to Saint Petersburg, to ask in her name, and most humbly of the Czar, that she should be excused — alleging that she was born in Caucasus, and that she could not act against her compatriots; and adding that the recompense she asked for her long services was permission to absent herself from Russia for several years. Her intention, if she obtained this, was to raise the mask as soon as she passed the frontier, and aid the rebels with her fortune and her counsel; and as, notwithstanding all his baseness, she still loved Saint Bertrand, she used all her influence to induce him to return to cards, hoping to ruin him and keep him dependent upon her. Then, after separating him from his wife, she meant to wash him clean from the smirch of his previous life, by associating him with the enterprise which she meant to aid.

Our readers have seen what measures she took to make the rupture between her lover and Barberine final and complete.

Now, as she sat alone with Saint Bertrand in the carriage, she asked herself if he would rise to the heights of the task to which she mentally devoted him. She felt a great and growing doubt upon this point.

Meanwhile they rolled along without saying a word to each other; but neither dreamed of a danger near at hand. They had been followed, and a carriage rolled not more than a hundred feet behind them, and still further back were several horsemen. Had Saint Bertrand looked out of the window, he

could have seen them like dark shadows upon the white road, for the night was clear and calm.

But Saint Bertrand had no thought of the outside world. He was cold and had shut all the windows, wrapped himself in his furs, and was buried in deep thought.

The carriage turned suddenly into a long avenue, shaded by trees which led up to the château. One of the horses, as they turned into this avenue, started and reared. The coachman thought that the animal was frightened by the shadows. He was mistaken, however, for the horse had seen a number of men hidden in the undergrowth. Saint Bertrand did not suspect any thing of all this, and the Princess was too much absorbed to notice it. When the carriage drew up at the step, a servant appeared at the door, and the two travelers stepped out. Saint Bertrand offered his arm to the Princess, and after crossing several rooms, they entered the *salon* where they were received by Gujenheim. He had retained the costume worn by the serfs in Russia, but under his humble, submissive air, there was an indefinable something, and a sarcastic light in his eyes.

La Méléline, when she saw him, turned very pale; then, with a frown she said:

“What reply do you bring me from Saint Petersburg?”

Gujenheim had undoubtedly foreseen this question, for he instantly replied to it by drawing from his pocket a folded paper, which he handed to his mistress.

She shivered as her fingers touched it; then, throwing it in the face of the Intendant, she cried:

"This, then, is the reward for all I have done! and it is you who are to arrest me, is it?"

Saint Bertrand did not understand one word of this dialogue, which was in Russ; but La Méléline promptly made it clear to him. He, greatly startled, endeavored to soothe her, but Gujenheim began to speak:

"I can not disobey the orders of the Czar, of course," he said, with an air of decision. "I warned you before I left that if you showed any reluctance to fulfill this new mission with which you were entrusted, you would expose yourself to the anger of a master who submits to no contradiction. I gave him your letter, and took pains to support it, moreover, with all the good reasons which you bade me add. I was listened to with patience, but I was then told that I should perish by the knout, if I did not promise to take you to the Caucasus, by force, if necessary, and then watch over the manner in which you should accomplish your mission. What could I do, but submit? and now you in your turn must do the same."

La Méléline, while Gujenheim was speaking thus, sank upon a seat.

"Never!" she cried suddenly. "I do not propose to be always a slave."

"But you will be compelled to go," said Gujenheim.

“Not I!” was her scornful reply.

“Yes!” answered the Intendant. “You have been suspected for some time. Your house has been watched at Moscow, and you have been followed all the way here. This château is surrounded, and you can not escape. A carriage is in waiting, with an escort. My advice to you is to submit quietly.”

Saint Bertrand asked several questions; but the Princess paid no attention to him. Her eyes were fixed, her nostrils dilated, and her lips compressed, as if some terrible resolution was born in her ardent soul. She sat for several minutes thus silent and absorbed; then, raising her head, she said to Gujenheim:

“You will grant me one hour to decide?”

“Impossible!” was the reply.

She shrugged her shoulders, and then going into the next room, brought back a pile of bank notes, which she placed in the hands of the Intendant.

“But —” stammered Gujenheim, suddenly softening.

“Now be off with you,” she said quietly. “I give you my word that I will not make any attempt to escape. Come back in an hour. You will find me here, and may then do with me precisely what you choose!”

Gujenheim turned on his heel, and the Princess, taking Saint Bertrand’s hand, drew him into the next room. When the door had closed behind them, he exclaimed:

"What does all this mean? Why did you not tell me that you were compelled to go to Caucasus?"

La Méléline seemed in a state of frightful excitement.

"Why did I not tell you?" she repeated. "Simply because I did not intend to go; because I implored the Czar to spare me the commission of new crimes. I told him that I was black with the stains of those which I had committed in his service, and he must spare me now."

"What did he wish you to do?" asked Saint Bertrand.

"He intends a repetition of the scenes of Varsovie. He intends to send entire families to Siberia, and to take in a net those men who will not submit, and who are my compatriots. This shall never be! I have been a spy and an executioner long enough. I dream of blood. Opium drowns thought, but it brings horrible images, and I do not choose that they shall represent the murdered and betrayed defenders of my country."

Saint Bertrand stood looking at her. She wheeled suddenly round upon him.

"Will you never know what remorse is?" she asked. "What is your heart made of? Do you never think of the poor creatures whom you sold? of that Wanda who loved you? Do they never come to you in your dreams? Is there never a voice in your ear, crying 'Assassin?'"

Saint Bertrand started back, with a heavy frown

upon his brow; then, as if eager to drive away a painful thought, he asked hastily:

“Well, what do you intend to do?”

“I do not intend to submit to the orders of the Czar.”

“Do you mean to fly?”

“No; flight is impossible.”

“How then?”

She was walking up and down the room as she spoke. At this question a gray pallor settled upon her face, and, standing in front of him, she said slowly:

“By death!”

Saint Bertrand uttered one brief sentence which pulled the mask from his innermost soul.

“And what will become of me?” he cried.

The Princess looked at him from head to foot. Her eyes blazed with scorn.

“This, then, is the reality of your love for me! In my death you see only the ruin of all your interests! and now you are saying to yourself: ‘Ah, why did I abandon my wife?’ Go, then, ignoble soul, and find her—that is, find her, if Rogatchef has not carried her off.”

“But,” said Saint Bertrand, with the *naïveté* which crime does not always preclude, “how the deuce am I to obey you? How can I find her? how can I tell where she is now?”

“You are absolutely odious in my eyes, sir,” said Méléline, as she turned away.

But he paid no attention to her words. He real-

ized nothing but his great terror of that poverty which he knew to be so close at hand. He overwhelmed her with reproaches; but she did not even answer them.

"You shall not kill yourself," he said. "You ought to live for yourself, if not for me!"

These words struck Méléline as absolutely ridiculous.

"'I ought to live for you?' Did you say that? And for your sake I ought to descend to the commission of the basest of crimes! You venture to ask me to do for you what I would not do for a child, if I had one. And by what right do you make this request? What have you ever done for me? What sacrifices have you ever made for me? There is one immense difference between us. I have done evil, all the time detesting it; and I have suffered as intensely as any human being can suffer at the despair and misery I have created—"

He interrupted her.

"You have a mania," he said, "for reading me moral lectures. I want no more sermons. Let us return to more practical matters. Go to Caucasus, if you are compelled to do so—"

She interrupted him in her turn.

"And you will go with me?" she asked. "You will assist me, if necessary, in the execution of the mission of blood I have received?"

He struck his foot violently upon the ground, and with an oath, exclaimed:

“We are only instruments, and the responsibility rests with him who commands us.”

She contemplated him with disgust.

“I have truth and common-sense on my side, and you, as always, are in the clouds. These Poles and these compatriots inspire me with no possible interest. Let them conspire, if they please, and let them be punished for it, as they deserve to be. They are revolutionists!”

La Mélédine pretended to be overcome with admiration.

“Upon my word,” she exclaimed, “who ever would have thought you would develop into a lover of order!”

In vain did he seek to soothe her. He knelt at her feet, but she was deaf to all his entreaties.

“If you meant to disobey the Czar, and kill yourself, to avoid the consequences of this disobedience, why did you bring me here?” he asked. Why did you bring me here?” he repeated.

“Because I did not know what would happen,” was her reply.

“But I love you!” he cried. “How can I live without you!”

She smiled.

“Listen,” she said. There is but one way of conciliating matters. I will feign to obey these orders from Saint Petersburg. We will start with Gujenheim. As soon as we reach Caucasus, we will take advantage of the first opportunity, and go over to the insurgents. Their cause is holy, and it shall

become yours. We will both of us redeem our past by devoting our lives to the enfranchisement of my people. But of one thing I must give you due warning; my property will be inevitably confiscated. I shall have nothing left in the world, except some jewels. You say you love me; that you can not live without me. Live then, with me, a life of expiation. The only proof you can now give me of your love, is to consecrate yourself to poverty.'

Saint Bertrand's exasperation, while he listened to these words, was indescribable.

"Was there ever any thing so utterly absurd and childish!" he exclaimed. "How can you talk in this frivolous manner, of throwing away your fortune? Are you mad? What would life be without money?"

At this moment footsteps were heard in the *salon*, and La Méléline quickly turned the key in the lock.

Gujenheim knocked.

"Madam," he said, "the hour has elapsed."

"Very well," answered the Princess, "in a moment."

Gujenheim waited on the other side of the door. La Méléline apparently thought it useless to continue her discussion with Saint Bertrand, and said not another word to him. Feeling that all hope was over, she went to a table and poured some water into a wine-glass, and drank two or three swallows; then, standing in front of a low sofa, she fixed her eyes on her lover who was watching her with astonishment, not knowing what she was about to do.

She seemed to be somewhat agitated, and tears were in her eyes. He had no suspicion of her intention, as she held no weapon in her hand. Suddenly she extended her hand, and, taking his, pressed it firmly.

“Farewell!” she said softly; “learn from me how one expiates one’s sins.”

And hastily opening a ring she wore on her finger, she carried it to her lips.

There was prussic acid in the ring; the effect was instantaneous, and the Princess fell, as if struck by lightning, upon the sofa. When Saint Bertrand reached her side she was already dead.

On hearing Saint Bertrand’s cries, Gujenheim burst open the door and made but one bound to the sofa. He lifted the arm of the Princess, saw the open ring, and understood the whole.

“This is just what I feared,” he murmured. “This woman has always been weakness itself.”

And this was La Méléline’s funeral oration!

Meanwhile Saint Bertrand, half mad with terror, rushed from the *salon*; no one offering any opposition, he left the *château*. Where he intended to go, he knew not; he had but one thought, to escape from the horrible spectacle. He flew like the wind, bareheaded, through the darkness, as if assassins were at his heels.

How long he ran, or where he went, he never knew. Day was just breaking; the road was utterly deserted, and there was not a house within sight. Suddenly, at quite a distance, he beheld in the gray

light of dawn a large traveling carriage, drawn by three horses, coming swiftly toward him. He had no idea who was in this carriage, of course, but he hailed it as a refuge. He saw it more and more distinctly, its yellow sides, its lanterns paling in the growing light, and the clouds of dust rising behind it. He heard the horses' feet, and the snapping of the whip. When the berlin was within twenty feet of him he planted himself in the middle of the road and cried out :

“Stop! Stop!”

But the horses did not stop.

It was the berlin which was bearing his wife, the Chevalier Florimond, and Eytmin, swiftly toward France. Eytmin, as our readers, know, was on the box beside the coachman. He recognized his master instantly, but could not imagine by what strange circumstance he was able to be there just at the precise moment that the carriage passed ; but as his mistress was asleep, Eytmin determined to take the responsibility upon himself ; he saw no use in deliberately replacing her in the chains from which she had just escaped. Instead, therefore, of bidding the coachman pull in his horses, he said :

“Whip them up, and drive on.”

Alas ! the charitable idea of the valet was neutralized by the very person who had inspired it. Barberine was not asleep, as Eytmin had supposed, and when she heard the loud voice calling in the road she dropped the window and looked out. She

saw her husband's face, and uttered a wild shriek. The coachman pulled in his horses.

Saint Bertrand clutched at the handle of the door, and as soon as the berlin was stationary he clambered in and sank into a corner. He was much exhausted, and all out of breath. He did not even wonder how his wife and his father came on the highway at this hour, although not even aware that his father was in Moscow. He did not ask a question, nor look at them. He did not inquire what had passed between Barberine and Rogatchef, for he did not care—he thought only of himself—nor did he inquire where they were going. He sat with his eyes fixed on vacancy, as if he had been suddenly awakened from a dream. When the horses started, and his wife interrogated him; when his father reproached him for his infamous conduct, he made no attempt at self-defense.

“Was your life really threatened?” said Barberine.

“I know nothing about it,” he answered.

“Did you deceive your wife?” asked Florimond.

“Deceive my wife?” repeated the Vicomte, vaguely.

“What was the meaning of that letter you wrote me?” asked his wife.

“Letter! I wrote you no letter.”

“But why were you here in this way, calling to us on the high road?”

“Why! Because I was expecting you, of course.”

Barberine and the Chevalier, seeing that it was useless to attempt to extort any thing from him, relapsed into silence. He leaned back among the cushions, with his eyes closed. By degrees he recovered his consciousness, and realized all that had taken place — his ruin, the promise he had made *Méledine* never again to see his wife; then the discussion in the *château*, and the suicide of his mistress. He said to himself that he was again without a sou in the world — that all the money lent to him by Gaskell and by Monsieur *Lorrieux* was lost, too — lost, also, was the hope that he had cherished of enriching himself through the Princess.

All this time Barberine was weeping silently, and the Chevalier doing his best to console her.

Saint Bertrand listened mechanically to their conversation, which at last aroused his interest.

“Do not weep,” said the Chevalier; “there may be good days in store for you yet. You are young; you have both beauty and talent; your scamp of a husband may yet reform. I will do my best to compel him to conduct himself as he should. He has wasted all your earnings, it is true; and now, when you work, you must take care of your salary yourself. Besides, you may be sure of aid from me; is not all I have yours? Look upon me as a father, and rely upon my assistance.”

Saint Bertrand hearing these words, straightened himself up and opened his eyes, and when

Florimond ceased speaking, his glance met that of his son, who leaned forward with parted lips.

Barberine awaited his words with some anxiety. The Chevalier anticipated some confession. But the Vicomte, with the calmest matter-of-fact air, said to his father :

“ Ah ! you have still something left, have you ? ”

CHAPTER XXVII.

A WOMAN'S HEROISM.

There was never a word of explanation between Saint Bertrand and his wife in regard to the events which had caused them to leave Moscow. The Vicomte had every reason to avoid all allusion to the matter, and Barberine did not wish to see herself compelled to openly despise her husband. But they were absolutely separated, except that they lived under the same roof.

Saint Bertrand yielded to destiny. Twice he had tried to leave Barberine, and twice circumstances had brought them together again. He said to himself that in all probability they should end their days together.

Several months after his return to Paris he made in his wife's name, a new engagement, with the administration of the opera. But Barberine's position there was in no degree such as it had been formerly. Two other *grandes danseuses* shared with her the favors of the public, and Barberine was often compelled to accept secondary parts. She was thin and worn, and had lost all that look of childish gaiety which had been her great charm. She danced now, not because it gave her pleasure, but merely to

perform her duties, and although she kept up her exertions to perfect herself in her profession, she produced very little effect upon the public. Her salary, notwithstanding Saint Bertrand's intrigues, was reduced to twenty thousand francs, and both husband and wife were greatly surprised at all the changes that had taken place during their absence of two years. The greater number of *habitués* had disappeared. Some were dead, and some had grown old and thought only of their health; the lions had lost their manes, their teeth, or their tails. The Comte de Perche was growing gray and had become rheumatic, and had begun to feel that life was an illusion and a snare. La Gruelle was married to a woman who had already caused him to regret having taken unto himself a wife, who had neither virtue, education, nor kindness of heart. Cocodés had relinquished the society of men and women for that of horses and grooms. Valmaséda, an old friend of Saint Bertrand's, was slowly dying of a cancer in the stomach. Gaskell had returned to America, from which country he sent occasional letters to Barberine. Of all her old circle only one was left, the Chevalier Florimond, her father-in-law, and he went off on long journeys from time to time. Saint Bertrand did not feel cordially disposed toward him, although the kind-hearted old gentleman was constantly making his daughter-in-law presents. He irritated his son by his constant praise of Barberine, and by his incessant entreaties that his son should adopt some business.

"What the deuce would you like me to do?" asked Saint Bertrand. "Perhaps you would like me to dance?"

But we must do him justice, for he was by no means indolent. He wrote notices of his wife and sent them to foreign papers; he constantly harassed the new Manager by urging him to give Barberine a more important position; and he played, not very high, it is true, which was, however, a matter of compulsion, not of choice, as he had nothing to risk. He eat, drank, and slept; went to the opera, and lounged in the streets, where he ogled the women, and said clever, wicked things.

He was still on the lookout for some happy occasion when, by one clever stroke, he could enrich himself; but this occasion was long in coming; the Vicomte was growing bald and acquiring a stomach, while deep lines were gathering about his eyes.

He kept Eytmin near him, not because he liked him, but because he performed his duties with a fidelity and zeal that he had never before known.

The Vicomte had many enemies, for his tongue had been very sharp. He was feared and avoided; but some of his enemies occasionally made an effort to avenge themselves. A couplet was composed at the opera, which for a week was the talk of Paris. The couplet in itself was in no way remarkable, but it struck the nail on the head. This was the way it went—poor enough in rhyme, but excellent in matter:

Monsieur de Saint Bertrand,
Is a man of great sense,
When he needs money
He says to his wife — "dance, my dear, dance!"
And when she has danced
He says — "dance again, my dear, dance!"

Strange to tell, his nature was so perverted that he was the first to be amused by these lines.

One day he found himself face to face with Rogatchef, who had been released from the painful position in which we left him at Moscow, by Gujenheim, and had immediately afterward left Russia. The Czar had taken occasion to express his displeasure at his intimacy with a contumacious rebel like Méléline, and had ordered him to travel for a year.

Saint Bertrand greeted him in the most amicable manner.

"I am only going through Paris," said Rogatchef. "I leave almost immediately for Marseilles."

"Can you lend me a few thousand francs?" asked Saint Bertrand, abruptly.

"Not I!" cried the Prince. "You have always brought me ill luck."

"You are very ungrateful," answered Saint Bertrand. "But for me you would have been killed on the battle field. Did I not save your life?"

"Very true," returned Rogatchef, "but I have repaid that obligation long ago."

"Well, we won't quarrel about it," said the Vicomte; "but you can surely lend me a thousand francs?"

"No."

"Five hundred, then?"

"No! I tell you."

"Ah! you are ruined, possibly?"

"By no means," answered Rogatchef. "I am richer than ever. My income is doubled by the death of my uncle, who died at Varsovie three months ago. But I don't propose to oblige you or any other man. I would sooner put my money in the fire."

"Upon my word, you are a most amiable person," said Saint Bertrand; "but, at least, tell me one thing: Why do you hate me so bitterly?"

"Because," answered Rogatchef, slowly, "you possess just that which I can never obtain."

He turned away as he spoke, and Saint Bertrand went home in a rage. He found his wife in tears. The Chevalier Florimond had been with her, and was suddenly attacked with apoplexy. The doctor, who had been hastily summoned, said he could not live more than two or three hours.

Saint Bertrand could not exchange a word with his father, for he had lost consciousness, and did not open his eyes again, not even to die. His will, when examined, bequeathed every thing to Barberine; and when matters were settled, it was found that there were about fifteen thousand francs coming to his daughter-in-law.

Saint Bertrand proposed to invest this sum; but the time had gone by when Barberine could not refuse him any thing. He swore and thundered, all

in vain. He could not obtain from her one franc of this money.

"Nothing ever succeeds with me now-a-days," he said to himself. "Life is intolerable as one grows older! Of all the people I knew years ago, only one is left, and that is my wife — a most singular woman she is, too. How is it that she remains faithful to me? Is it stupidity, or is it principle?"

All Paris — that is to say, all the fashion of Paris — began to talk of Barberine again. The *danseuse* was twenty-seven, and charming as ever. It was known that her husband treated her very badly, and no one could understand her propriety of conduct. Each new adorer who approached her with aspirations, was speedily undeceived.

"She has no heart!" said one.

"After all, she is not interesting," said another.

"I think she is silly," exclaimed still another, who had been disappointed.

Barberine was lacking in neither heart nor intellect. She was not happy, it is true; but as she indulged a hope that at some future day she should regain her husband's affection, she was at least resigned to her lot.

The time had now come, however, when she had new trials to undergo. She had not husbanded her strength, and had not taken care of herself. She had been guilty of several imprudences, such as going from her dressing-room to the stage in mid-winter, with her knees uncovered, and for some time had felt much pain in the ankles and in the ten-

dons of the legs ; but she danced on ! Ill, exhausted, pale, but marvelously lovely, she appeared before the criticising public night after night, and each night was to her a new agony. In vain did she take foot-baths of bullock's blood to strengthen herself. Her first youth was gone, and with it her strength. The poor sylphide lost her breath, and the tears often stood in her eyes, as she danced on those poor feet which, perhaps that very morning, had been touched with hot irons. One night, even, she danced with a blister of cantharides under her silk tights, all up the back of her legs ; and on her return, lame and heart-sick, dragging her broken wing like the pigeon in the fable, she was compelled to endure a most atrocious scene. Saint Bertrand told her that she was pretending to be ill, so as to shirk work. She said not one word in reply to this accusation, but listened in silence.

Things now reached such a point that disagreeable observations were made in the journals. It was a matter of surprise to the public, they said, that she should be retained at the theater. They said coarsely that she was "used up" and "done for."

Saint Bertrand, in despair, did his best to silence them, and fought three duels with the most malicious among the journalists ; but the criticisms went on, becoming more and more severe.

One misfortune rarely comes alone. Just at the moment when Barberine's engagement expired at the opera, the Monarchy of July left France, retiring before the barricades of February. Our readers

know the disorder and confusion that followed this unlooked-for Revolution. Every body looked upon themselves as ruined; every body had to save money; the opera management began to retrench—and as a suitable beginning, refused to renew the engagement with Barberine.

Saint Bertrand went nearly wild. He wrote to London, Vienna and Saint Petersburg, offering his wife on every stage in Europe; but Barberine's reputation had greatly diminished on account of the attacks in the journals. Besides, Europe had at that time little heart for dancing. Barberine was everywhere rejected.

"Let us go to America!" she said to her husband. "The voyage will do me good, and my strength will return."

"But we have no money," answered Saint Bertrand, in despair.

"I beg your pardon," she answered; "we have the fifteen thousand francs from your father."

Saint Bertrand embraced her with passionate ardor; and more reconciled with each other than they had been for months, they left France in the month of May, 1848.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BROKEN WINGS.

During the passage from Havre to New York, Saint Bertrand was at times sulky enough. Barberine, who still suffered intensely from neuralgic pain, scarcely left her bed. Vainly did her husband remind her that she was wasting her strength, and that she would not regain it until after a month's exercise.

"You are probably right," she said, sadly, "but what can I do?"

Then this tender husband, wishing to utilize the voyage, spent most of his time in rubbing his wife's feet with brandy and quinine. Barberine was not duped by this solicitude.

"You do well to take care of your bread winner," she said, one morning, half bitterly. She hoped to elicit from him some protest or denial, but the justice of her observation merely caused him to smile.

In New York they had lodgings on Fifth Avenue. Saint Bertrand had selected this aristocratic quarter in order to throw powder into the eyes of the Americans. He wished to make them believe that Barberine was to make her appearance there, not from

necessity, but from choice, and that she wished to extend and consolidate her reputation. This plan, in its conception, was sagacious, but it was necessary to carry it out most thoroughly, and Saint Bertrand had not money enough to establish his wife as he desired. Life is very dear in New York, and Barberine was compelled to accept an apartment of three rooms. She had no other servant than Eytmin, and made her toilet and dressed her hair for the first time in her life without assistance.

The very day of their arrival Saint Bertrand went to call upon the editors of all the journals in New York, which at that time counted the very pretty number of sixty-eight, of which twenty-five were dailies, and the terror of the various artists.

All the journalists whom Saint Bertrand saw were amiability itself, and could refuse nothing, they said, to the happy husband of so charming a woman.

That same evening Saint Bertrand wished to go to Castle Garden to examine the stage where he desired Barberine to appear. The manager with whom he had been negotiating offered him a box. Britannicus was played that night, and Saint Bertrand, who never enjoyed tragedy, sat so long over his dinner that the third act was almost over when he entered the box with Barberine. Their arrival created no sensation whatever, as the audience was absorbed in what was at that moment going on upon the stage. Nero had just surprised Britannicus at

Janie's feet, and the actor who represented the Emperor was foaming with rage.

Then Britannicus answered Nero. Barberine, who had hardly glanced at the stage, started when she heard the voice of this actor, who was small, thin, and too old for the part he was playing. She quickly leveled her glass at the stage, and recognized her dear old friend Gaskell.

She leaned toward her husband.

"Look! Arthur," she said. "Is not that Gaskell whom I see there?"

Saint Bertrand, too, recognized him at once, but neither he nor his wife could comprehend by what series of events the impressario had gone back to his profession; and yet it was, after all, a natural thing enough. Gaskell had been a manager by force of necessity. His vocation was not there, for the great dream of his life had been to play in tragedy. He had endeavored, but not with success, to realize this dream in his youth, and had not been discouraged. Happening to be in New York at a time when the Americans had taken a fancy to Racine, he resolved to take advantage of the caprice, and had made, finally, a happy hit.

When the curtain fell after the short scene between Nero and Barrhus, Gaskell was recalled by a clamor of two thousand voices. Coming close to the footlights, he laid his hand upon his heart and saluted the public with modest assurance.

Saint Bertrand could not believe his eyes, and yet the evidence of success was clear before them.

"The great tragic actor," as he was called by the Americans, had hardly reached his dressing room than Barberine threw herself into his arms. Gaskell received her with dignified affection, and there was a faint air of patronage in the manner with which he extended his hand to Saint Bertrand. Barberine told him, with a laugh, that she was really jealous of him. The fact was that never, not even in her palmiest days at the Grand Opera in Paris, had she received such rounds of applause.

Gaskell called on Barberine the next day, and when she told him frankly why she had come to New York, "the great actor," with his usual kindness, promised her to do at once his very best to secure her an engagement. He finally obtained from his own manager permission for Barberine to give three representations the next week, and the manager also agreed, if she pleased the New York public, to engage her at Castle Garden for a year, with an excellent salary.

Neither Gaskell, Saint Bertrand, nor the manager of the theater, had the smallest doubt of Barberine's success. She was the only one who had any fears, but many anxious hours were hers. She no longer cherished the smallest delusion in regard to herself. She knew she could not dance well. Talent, willingness, experience and beauty are not enough; there must also be, in the language of the *coulisses*, "legs and lungs," in order to take the first part in a ballet, and these were just what Barberine no longer had. Sorrow and anxiety had done their

work, and contributed their share toward breaking her down. Nevertheless, she with her usual sweet courage practiced assiduously for a week, and exhibited much of her former agility in the rehearsal of "La Giselle;" but she had lost all confidence in herself, and the evening of her first appearance she stumbled as she left her dressing-room, and at once felt that this accident was an omen of evil.

The public who were to criticize her, was the same which we have seen was so carried away by admiration for Gaskell's talents. This fact, which would have terrified a careful observer, was precisely that which re-assured the *danseuse* in some degree.

"These good people do not strike me as very fastidious," she said. "I don't believe they would ever dare to hiss me."

She was well received when she went on the stage. Her grace and her beauty produced their usual effect. She was thought very charming as she floated over the stage, picking a Marguerite to pieces. Unfortunately, as she executed the *pas* that followed, she felt a pain so sharp in her heel, that she had no strength to do more than walk. The public, indulgent as it was, was suddenly chilled. They wished to admire the *debutante*, but were really disappointed. There was more kindness than enthusiasm in the applause. Gaskell, who was in the *coulisse* by Saint Bertrand's side, fairly wept at seeing his sylphide, once so light, drag herself about with evident pain before the footlights.

But Bertrand did not weep. As Barberine passed near him, he said in a hoarse whisper :

“ Look as if you were alive, will you ? ”

And then, again :

“ Do you call that dancing ? I should say it was crawling.”

Barberine heard these gentle amenities which affected her like spears, and then, almost overwhelmed as she was with mingled shame and grief, she suppressed her pain and tried to raise herself upon the points of her toes ; but she was out of breath ; large red spots marred the delicate beauty of her shoulders ; and while she tried to smile, the tears ran down her cheeks. At last the end of her *rôle* was reached ; but her success was merely a *succes d'estime*, and she was carried to her coupé, for she could not walk.

The next morning Saint Bertrand used the hot iron around his wife's heels. Thanks to this torture, Barberine was able to dance twice more ; but the New York public, *débonnair* as it always is toward women, could not become enthusiastic about a *danseuse* who had done nothing but show the most excellent intentions. She was applauded in order to encourage her ; but it was decided that she could only play the second *rôles*, and the manager offered her a six-months engagement, for the amount of four thousand francs in full. But people can't live six months in New York on four thousand francs, and this fact Gaskell readily understood. He agreed to contribute to the house-keeping expenses in propor-

tion to his receipts, and each month that winter handed over to Saint Bertrand the full amount of his salary, and the contemptible egotist never once thanked him !

Eytmin, too, wished to aid his mistress, and he told her that in future he did not wish any salary from her, and then went on to urge her to accept his economies.

"Have you been able to lay aside any thing, then ?" asked Barberine.

"Yes, madame ; I have so few wants, you know, I have saved nearly two thousand francs."

"Take good care of them, then," she answered. "The day may not be so very far off, when I may need them far more than now."

"Please God, madame, that you are mistaken," answered Eytmin ; "but if further trials are in store for you, and you need money, will you promise to use this of mine ?"

"Yes, I promise you, my good friend !" answered Barberine.

He kissed her hand respectfully. Tears were in the eyes of both. Misfortunes draw people closely together.

Barberine grew weaker and weaker. She was humiliated, and languishing like a bird whose wings have been cut. Dancing had been her one joy ; and now, young as she was, her dancing days were over ! If duty and fear of God had not withheld her, she would have killed herself, rather than en-

dure so many mortifications ; but hope was not altogether gone.

"Who can tell?" she said to herself; "my strength may yet come back."

When the time of her engagement was over, she realized that there was nothing more for her to do in New York.

"Where can we go now?" asked Saint Bertrand, moodily.

"To New Orleans," answered Gaskell, promptly, "and I will abandon every thing here, and go with you. Besides, tragedy is appreciated at last everywhere. I shall give some representations down there myself. These Southern people are made of money, and I am greatly mistaken if we don't fill our purses."

They left New York in January, 1849, but Gaskell's prophecies were unfulfilled. The good man was so frightfully hissed at New Orleans on his first appearance as Britannicus, that he never ventured on a second.

Barberine had no better luck than her old friend had. She was not hissed, because she was pretty, and Americans profess to worship women ; but she gave no pleasure to any one by her dancing, for she could not execute the steps in which she had formerly excelled.

Saint Bertrand was exasperated with every body, and in order to avenge himself upon some one, he, after tolerating Gaskell so long as Gaskell had contributed to the expenses of the *ménage*, now that the

poor actor had become a burthen, proposed to get rid of him.

Barberine opposed this meanness with all her strength, and as her husband lost no opportunity of insulting and humiliating the old actor who had formerly done so much for him, she said to Eytmin that she would now gladly accept his offer.

Eytmin's two thousand francs were handed over to Gaskell by Barberine, as the first instalment of her debt to him.

"Would that I could give it all to you at one time," she said.

"If you did I should only return it to you," answered Gaskell. "I want money only for you."

"I know that very well," said Barberine, "for you are the best man in the world. But what is to become of us now? Each time I dance here the house is more than half empty."

"I think," answered Gaskell, "that it would be wise to go to San Francisco. They fairly shovel up gold there, you know! They have just finished a theater. Emigrants from all parts of the world are flocking there, and perhaps," he added, sadly, "they may receive me better than in this confounded town. What do you say?"

"I am ready to do whatever you say," answered Barberine.

Saint Bertrand appeared at this moment, and Barberine told him of Gaskell's new idea, but he was not at first impressed by it.

"San Francisco!" he cried, "why the deuce

should we go among savages? We shall die of hunger there."

"Then where can you go?" asked Barberine.

"How can I tell? Very well, let us go to San Francisco then." He was dazzled by the thought of the gold mines. "But the money for traveling," he continued, "where is that to come from?"

"I have a few diamonds still," said Barberine, looking away.

Saint Bertrand colored. Barberine had conquered him again, as she had done at least twenty times since their marriage two years previously.

They embarked at New Orleans in the month of June for Chagres; from there they were to cross the Isthmus, partly by boat and partly on the backs of mules, and then were to re-embark at Panama.

CHAPTER XXIX.

BETWEEN NEW ORLEANS AND SAN FRANCISCO.

The journey from Chagres to Panama, across the Isthmus, was, in those days, not without danger as well as fatigue. Our travelers realized this on their arrival at the first village, where it was almost impossible to find any shelter, so crowded was it with emigrants. Fortunately Gaskell met one of his old theatrical comrades, who had made this trip to San Francisco more than once, and this good man, eager to oblige his compatriots, offered to share his lodgings with them.

Barberine, the evening of her arrival, sitting at her window and looking out on the beautiful verdure, could hardly believe that she was in one of the most unhealthy quarters of the globe.

"Fever riots here at all seasons, my dear child," said the old comedian, "and the least imprudence will bring it on. If you have any regard for your health you will be more cautious than you ever were in your life. Do not expose yourself to the sun nor to the night air. Drink only tea and coffee, and make all the haste you can to reach the Pacific, for in spite of all the precautions I have indicated, I

assure you that every hour you linger here is full of danger."

Barberine compared this land, so unhealthy, and yet so charming in appearance, to certain men whose external qualities are all that is desirable, and whose souls are full of bad thoughts.

But Saint Bertrand, who had not the same reasons for making similar reflections, saw in the old actor's words only another reason for hastening on to San Francisco. That same evening he purchased provisions, and hired a boat to go up the river as far as the place where the mules were to be taken, and the very next morning our travelers left the malarious village. The boat hired by Saint Bertrand was an Indian pirogue, hollowed from an immense trunk of a tree. Two of the vagabond blacks from the Antilles rowed them. Barberine lay under an awning arranged by Eytmin with four sticks and a canvas sail. Gaskell and Saint Bertrand, sitting opposite each other, held over their heads huge umbrellas, and Eytmin was sheltered somewhat from the sun's rays by the pile of luggage.

This journey might have been a party of pleasure to these four travelers, if any one of them had been less sore at heart. The country through which they were traveling is the most beautiful in the world. Nature shows herself there in the greatest luxuriance. On either side of the clear but narrow stream, rose gigantic trees, whose branches met twenty feet above, and formed a long gallery, or rather a succession of domes, from which hung like

lusters and girandoles, swinging branches of brilliant flowers. The transparent water, in its alternate light and shadow, reflected these cupolas of verdure. Huge fish played in the depths, and alligators sunned themselves on the shore. The air was heavy with perfume, and resounded with the musical whirr and buzz of insects, while birds in the early morning fairly split their throats with singing. The rays of the sun in some places could not penetrate the leaves; and then, again, they would open, and the blue sky would appear, or the summits of distant mountains, blue with haze, palm trees at their base, and level meadows where cattle were grazing. Then the wall of foliage would meet again, and the boat glide on in heavy shadows.

All at once a flash of lightning would be seen — and thunder rolled. The leaves trembled in the stillness as if some hidden hand were shaking them, and then down came the rain, rattling through the branches. Presently the storm was over. A thick mist rose from the shore, and the birds that had been dumb with fright, began to sing once more.

These showers are difficult to describe, for the rain falls in sheets. Nothing can be done except to endure them with all the philosophy in one's power, for there is no possible shelter from them.

Gaskell, accustomed to all the vicissitudes of a wandering life, resigned himself to be wet to the skin. Half lying on a trunk, with his feet in the water which was in the bottom of the boat, he did his best to keep the umbrella over his head; but the

umbrella was of little use, and presently doubled up under the weight of the rain, and the unhappy impressario dropped his head and received the inconvenient baptism with philosophy. Eytmin was as patient as Gaskell. To be wet through was not, to him, a matter of much moment; but Eytmin never complained. Saint Bertrand was the only one who lost his temper. He wrapped himself in a blanket at first, but the blanket was wet through in two minutes, and then he crawled under his wife's awning, as she begged him to do; but she had only a poor recompense for her kindness. He began at first to grumble at the evil fortune which had sent them to this vile place where they should all die, he said, of the Chagres fever. To hear him, any one would have supposed that he had never been in favor of this San Francisco plan. This trip was ridiculous, he said. It really would have been much better had they never left France; and he continued to complain until the rain ceased.

Barberine listened to all these moans and regrets without a word. She might have said that she was enduring quite as much inconvenience as himself; but she thought it wiser to say nothing, for she had long since given up all idea of arguing with her husband. Still, as he seemed inclined to hold her responsible for every misfortune that had happened to them since their marriage, she could not resist the desire to show him how unjust he was. She raised herself on her elbow, and said sadly:

"How can you talk in this way? Have you

lost your memory? Tell me, if you ever knew a woman more devoted to a man, than I have been to you. I wish to remind you that you have been my first and only affection; that since the day that your hand first touched mine, I have consecrated my life to you. I wish to ask if I have ever given you any reason for complaint? and, what have you ever done for me? Once, I think, you loved me — no, that is not the word — you had a passion for me; but how long did it last? You have rewarded my affection by a series of the most glaring infidelities. Have you forgotten the day I met you after a year's separation? Do you remember your humility then, and your protestations? I loved you, and I forgave you; but that was not all. Two weeks later, I married you!"

She relapsed into silence. The storm was over; the boat was floating down the river; Gaskell was asleep — his wet garments smoking in the sun, and Eytmin seemed lost in thought. It was possible that some few disconnected words, uttered by Barberine, had reached his ears. Saint Bertrand's face was very dark; but he did not speak. Barberine glanced around sadly enough, and then continued:

"My heart has been ready to burst for a long, long time. I have not complained, because I was too proud to do so. Question your own conscience. Tell me what my life has been since I became your wife. I alone have borne all the expenses of our *ménage*. I have almost killed myself with work that you might live. If to-day, after rejecting many

brilliant offers that have been made to me, I find myself at thirty condemned to exile, is it not to you that I owe it? What have you done with the money I have made? with Gaskell's little fortune? and how have you treated me? Can I ever forget that, besides wishing to desert me in Russia, you have since ventured to raise your hand in violence to me?"

Still he did not reply. All that she said was entirely true. Although he felt no remorse, he was softened, possibly, by solitude and isolation from the world. Possibly, too, this was one of those brief moments when conscience is aroused in the most perverted souls. He looked at his wife, and realized for the first time for months, that she was still beautiful. Barberine had become excited. She did not notice the look riveted upon her by Eytmin, as she continued:

"You consider my conduct incomprehensible? I agree with you. I had not one excuse only for leaving you; I had a thousand. There is not another woman in the world who would have borne as long as I the horrible life you imposed upon me. Any other woman would have revenged herself. And you know that women, particularly those situated like myself, have an easy vengeance ready to their hand. More than once have I been tempted to yield to my just indignation and fly from you. It was not my affection for you that withheld me. You will smile when I tell you that it was Duty that retained me at your side, it was Duty that enabled me

to endure your insults, your ill treatment, and, worse than all, your indifference. Without speaking of your infidelities, or of your infamy in wishing me to be unfaithful to you, I must draw your attention to the great change that has taken place in your character and in your manners since that terrible Russian episode, from which time dates my most sorrowful hours. You have grown rough and coarse. Once there was a certain *je ne sais quoi* which caused me, as well as others, to overlook your faults, which, indeed, gave to them a certain grace. But now you show yourself as you really are ; the charm of manner has vanished."

"You are right!" exclaimed Saint Bertrand, carried away by an unusual desire to speak the truth, as well as by the strange beauty of his wife's face. "All that you say is true, absolutely true; and you have not said half enough! I suppose I am about as bad a man as there is in the world. This avowal I make to you, because I consider you the best of women. Not only am I unworthy of your affection and of your pity, but if you knew me as I really am, you would feel an absolute loathing for me. I loathe myself sometimes! I was born good. My weakness, my pride, and the world, have ruined me. I never have attempted to struggle against my passions. I have betrayed every human being who has ever loved me. There has been a certain maternal element in your affection for me, and I have deceived you. I have looked upon you since our marriage as my resource, and have taken a vindic-

tive pleasure in knowing you to be unhappy, and in saying to myself, that it was for me that your youth had fled and your beauty faded. You know me now, Barberine; why do you not leave me?"

"No, I shall never leave you," his wife answered, as she slowly raised her head. "Remorse can not be far from the heart that confesses. To accuse yourself, as you have now done, is almost a reparation in itself."

This was not the first time that Barberine had endeavored to awaken her husband to a sense of his wrong doing, but until this occasion she had always failed. Saint Bertrand would go away and leave her, or he would listen to her unmoved, or would answer her with biting sarcasm, and the state of things between them after one of these conversations was more alienated than before. But now all was different; he was touched by her sweetness and generosity, and earnestly asked her to forgive him.

Barberine would have given him her life had he asked it in such a tone. They continued to talk in a low voice. Saint Bertrand was as tender and lover-like as in past years, while Barberine's face glowed with smiles and tears. The evening was coming on apace; the sun was low in the horizon, and the western sky rich with colors; the flowers were sweeter than ever, and the birds continued to sing. Eytmin, looking on, understood all, though he had heard but little.

“Good Heavens!” he said to himself, “how can she love such a man?”

Gaskell, suddenly awaking, rubbed his eyes, and thought himself the victim of some optical illusion when he beheld Saint Bertrand holding his wife’s hand with an air of tenderness.

The sun went down, and the boat was moored at the shore. The travelers made their preparations to pass the night in a temporary cabin with a roof of palm leaves.

After dinner, Saint Bertrand lounged away from the hut, and Gaskell took that opportunity to speak to Barberine.

“What has occurred?” he said. “One would think, to look at you, that you and your husband had never ceased to adore each other!”

“You will think me very foolish,” she answered, “but it is none the less true, that all the evil he has done can not prevent me from loving him, and this day will be one of the happiest of my life.”

“Women are simply inconceivable,” muttered Gaskell. “Can you not see that by your foolish indulgence you sanction all his bad conduct, even to the cruel treatment which he has lavished upon you?”

“What would you have?” she answered. “I can not forget that he is my husband.”

Saint Bertrand’s step was heard, and the night passed without any incident of account.

The next day they went on board the pirogue

once more, and at night reached Crucès. From Crucès they went to Panama on mules.

“You shall never have any reason to complain of me again,” said Saint Bertrand to Barberine, as they took possession of their narrow cabin on board the Panama steamer. “The whole of my future life shall be passed in making you forget the past.”

“Poor child! Poor child!” said Gaskell, whose cabin was next that of the husband and wife, and who heard these words.

CHAPTER XXX.

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

After a journey of eighteen days, the vessel on which were our four travelers dropped anchor in front of San Francisco. The town looked very odd to them, framed, as it was, by a circle of hills, with thousands of ships lying in the harbor. But when, after landing on a long quay, they went away from the shore, their astonishment and admiration were mingled with a sense of discomfort. The City of Gold, as Americans called it at that time, was any thing but attractive. It looked less like a town than like an immense camp.

While the cart that bore the luggage of our emigrants was slowly ascending a perpendicular street, the travelers followed it on foot, looking back from time to time with an ever-growing feeling of disappointment. Among what barbarians did they find themselves, after their long and fatiguing journey? Around them stood huts of mud and wooden houses, three or four stories in height, perched on perilous eminences. Not a street was paved. Some of them had a raised wooden sidewalk, and the mud was black and ill-smelling under the hot sun. Wagons

and carts were lumbering through this mud. The town consisted of a cluster of huts, a church and two taverns. At the corners yawned huge reservoirs, multiplied by the dread of fire. Every other shop contained eatables of one kind or another, while huge placards, advertising building materials, met them at every turn. An old, dismantled vessel was transformed into a *café*, and further on a huge frame building, surmounted by a United States flag, wore on the front the words "Adelphi Theater."

The people in this most extraordinary town were as wonderful as the town. They came from every quarter of the globe—French, English, Americans, Germans and Irish elbowed Chinese, Spaniards and Mexicans. Negroes bore burdens on their heads. Half naked Indians, sitting on the ground, watched the passers-by with an indolent air. Sailors sat at tables in front of the taverns and sang in chorus. Miners in their long boots, with unkempt hair and beard, disputed loudly. Among the crowd moved gentlemen correctly costumed, with umbrellas in their hands, no more astonished than if all they saw was the most natural thing in the world, and looking quite as if they were walking in the streets of London and Paris. Occasionally even well-dressed women were seen; some of them bold and aggressive, others perfectly proper in manner. Almost all the men wore a revolver in the belt, and every possible idiom fell on the ear in this prosaic Tower of Babel.

Saint Bertrand, in consternation, asked himself if it would be possible to find a suitable lodging in this town. Barberine, in great disappointment, walked silently and slowly on; and Gaskell, more disturbed than the husband or wife, said to Eytmin, that they would probably go directly back to France. The cart drew up before a large house, constructed of unbaked brick, around which people were hurrying to and fro. The driver, a Frenchman who had evidently known better days, turned to Saint Bertrand and said :

“This is the most comfortable hotel in the town.”

A man emerged from the hotel at this moment, to receive the travelers, and, as he opened his lips, Saint Bertrand uttered a cry of surprise, for he recognized a money-lender whom he had known in Paris, Cerviero by name.

Cerviero recognized Saint Bertrand at the same moment, and lavished upon him the most profuse protestations of friendship; he led the party across the large *salon* in which his wife was installed as *dame du comptoir*. He took them to a small room in the rear, which he used as an office, and, as he gave them chairs, said the newspapers had been full of the approaching arrival of the celebrated Barberine, and that every body in San Francisco was crazy to see her.

“But, Monsieur Cerviero,” answered Saint Bertrand, “this town is not in the slightest degree what we were led to expect. My wife, notwithstanding her talents, can not make money enough

here to give her bread. I think we shall leave at once."

"Nonsense!" answered Cerviero. "Your idea in coming here was an absolute inspiration. You must not judge San Francisco by appearances. The town came into existence yesterday, it is true; but its growth is hourly. In three months you will not be able to recognize it. People pay the wildest prices here, for every thing is lacking, except money, which is most abundant—gold, I should say, not money; and if madame," he added, turning toward Barberine, "has but half the talent that she had when I last saw her, your fortunes are made, for there are many Parisians here, and we have few pleasures."

Saint Bertrand looked from his wife to Gaskell, as if to ask what they thought; but Cerviero left them no time to speak.

"I tell you," he said in the quick, nervous tone of those persons whose minds are kept always on the stretch by a pressure of business; "I tell you that I, a year ago, was nearly penniless, and I came to San Francisco to try my fortune. I thought precisely as you did when I arrived here, and regretted the blunder I had made; but I soon discovered that I had obeyed an inspiration of genius. I had a hundred thousand francs of borrowed money with me, and now that money is quadrupled. This hotel belongs to me, and I have beside two dwelling-houses in another part of the town. I have a tenth interest in our theater, too. I have tried every thing—started a *café* and a laundry. I have obtained mules

and vehicles, Chinese men, and women from different lands to come here. My wife and I have toiled like beavers, and we have been prosperous."

"I congratulate you," said Saint Bertrand, "but if we should decide to remain here, can you take us in somewhere?"

"Certainly; as I told you, I have two houses. I will let you the smallest which is respectably furnished, and you will be very comfortable there."

"And what may the price be?" asked Barberine.

"Almost nothing, madame. Only four thousand francs per month."

His auditors fairly started from their seats in their surprise at these words.

"Four thousand francs," cried Gaskell.

"And you call that nothing!" said Saint Bertrand.

"I certainly do," answered Cerviero. "Did I not tell you there was plenty of money in San Francisco? What does it matter to you? Your wife will make a thousand crowns a night."

"Three thousand francs, do you mean?" asked Saint Bertrand, breathlessly.

"More than that, in all probability," the man replied; "but she must agree to follow my advice."

"And what is that, sir?" said Barberine, pleasantly.

"In the first place, your husband must be your manager."

"That is my department," interposed Gaskell, quickly.

Saint Bertrand eyed him askance.

"That is to say," continued Cerviero, "he must agree to give the representations at our theater at his own risk. We will let it, with scenery, lights and service, for six thousand francs a night."

"A most exorbitant price," muttered Saint Bertrand.

"No, monsieur, not if you receive ten thousand francs as receipts; you will see that your profits will be considerable."

"And you feel sure of this amount?"

"Perfectly sure; there are so few amusements that the same persons will come twenty times to see your wife dance. If she dances only three times each week, she will make forty thousand francs per annum; so that in a year you can return to France with a half million in your pocket."

Barberine hoped that she should be able to dance twelve times in the month for a year, particularly as she was so much stronger than she had been. She was full of hope, overjoyed at the prospect of once more enriching her husband. As to Saint Bertrand, he was radiant.

The two contracts, that of the house and the theater, were signed at once, and the travelers installed themselves in their new home, rejoicing at the happy chance which had thrown them in the way of Cerviero.

The following days were passed by Barberine in arranging for the ballet of *La Sylphide*. Gaskell and Saint Bertrand assisted her to the best of their

ability. The *corps de ballet* of the San Francisco theater was scanty, and consisted of young and inexperienced girls. Where were twelve to be found that were pretty enough to figure as Sylphide's companions? As to the man who was to take the part of James, he was so awkward that Saint Bertrand took the *rôle* from him and entrusted it to a woman. The scenery was well enough, but the orchestra drove Gaskell wild. It was almost impossible to induce them to play in time.

While Gaskell, Barberine and Saint Bertrand were thus occupied, enormous placards borne through the streets announced to the inhabitants that they would shortly enjoy the pleasure of seeing a *danseuse* directly from the Grand Opera in Paris.

Saint Bertrand soon had a convincing proof of the justice of Cerviero's prognostications. The box office was literally besieged by the crowd, and the evening that Barberine was to dance for the first time at the Adelphi, every seat in the house was taken for ten representations. Gaskell rubbed his hands joyously, Saint Bertrand was gentle and affectionate, and Barberine, whose heart was light in consequence of the love he had shown her for a month, promised him she would dance as she did in her best days, even if it were to kill her.

The evening before the representation she went out with him to buy some trifling additions to her toilette. The wreaths of flowers she had brought with her from New Orleans were crushed in her trunk,

and she thought she could make one up according to her own fancy; but there was at that time but a scanty supply of millinery in San Francisco, and Barberine, after looking over all their boxes and finding nothing suitable, was obliged to content herself with a wreath of natural flowers, promised by a gardener just outside of the town.

As they walked along the shore on their way home, Saint Bertrand tenderly assiduous to his wife, holding her parasol over her head and talking most agreeably, they heard the report of a cannon, and looking off over the water perceived a beautiful yacht which was waiting for a pilot at the Golden Gate. They paid little attention to this incident, as they were naturally somewhat absorbed in themselves, at this crisis in their lives. Nevertheless, trifling as it seemed to them, this incident was not without its influence on the events of the following day.

That same evening, while they were at dinner, Cerviero announced that a wealthy foreigner, on his way from India in his yacht, returning to Europe by Cape Horn, had just arrived in San Francisco, and learning that the celebrated Barberine was to dance the next evening at the theater, had sent for a box, but there was none to be had. The stranger, therefore, had been obliged to content himself with the stall which Cerviero had himself intended to occupy, and which he yielded for the sum of two hundred francs.

The next day was devoted to repose by Barber-

ine, who felt better than she had done for months. Her rheumatism was entirely gone, and she was in excellent spirits.

Saint Bertrand did not leave her for a moment. He made her drink several glasses of excellent Bordeaux, and eat a broiled cutlet, the cooking of which he, himself, superintended, that it might be rare, and therefore easily digested.

Barberine was greatly touched by this attention, and laughed and talked gaily; but as the day wore on she became very nervous. As the decisive moment drew nearer she experienced a sensation like that of a soldier who, just as he goes into battle, thinks for the first time of death, and says to himself that the next day, at that same hour, every thing will be over for him.

She expressed these feelings to Saint Bertrand, who laughed at her fears, and encouraged her, saying:

"It is nothing, dear! Only one year more of work, and we shall be rich. Courage, my child."

"I have plenty of courage," answered Barberine. "It is not that I lack."

"And what then?"

"Nothing. But there is something in the air that saddens me to-night. It seems to me as if we were soon to be separated. But this will never do. Kiss me, and don't let us talk any more."

The hour of going to the theater had now arrived, and Barberine went to her dressing room, accompanied by her husband. She arranged her hair, and,

thanks to natural flowers, which the gardener had brought her, nothing could have been prettier than the wreath with which her graceful head was crowned. She sighed a little as she fastened the false diamonds which replaced the gems she had formerly worn in her ears. Then she went on with her toilette with all that attention and minuteness of careful detail which *danseuses* carry even further than other women.

Her husband took the place of a maid, and aided her in her toilette, performing his task with an air of experience. To dress any woman is not an easy thing for masculine fingers, but to dress a *danseuse* is the most difficult thing in the world, as she must, of course, be entirely at ease in all her movements; a pin out of place, or a string that cuts, is quite enough to paralyze all her movements, or to render them awkward.

When this momentous toilette was at last over, and she had puffed out her gauze skirts and fastened on her wings of peacock feathers to her shoulders, and laced her rose-colored boots, Saint Bertrand, standing at some little distance, was struck by her beauty. Never in all the years he had known her had Barberine seemed to him so beautiful; her dainty feet had regained their elasticity, her bust was beautiful, and her shoulders, arms and hands were exquisite in their almost girlish freshness. Her head, well set on her shoulders, was full of charm. She began to pirouette on the tips of her toes, her skirts spread about her like an immense parasol, and flying

toward her husband, she threw herself into his arms.

"Upon my life, it is an absolute resurrection," he cried.

Gaskell entered the room as Saint Bertrand uttered these words. He came to tell Barberine that the public were becoming impatient. They went upon the stage together, just as the director struck the three peremptory raps.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE LAST APPEARANCE.

When the curtain arose, Barberine, who was on the stage, was astonished at the aspect of the house. It seemed to her large, but very dark — gas was not known in San Francisco, and the footlights and chandeliers consisted of lamps, which gave a very insufficient light. The lamps smoked, and a smell of hot oil filled the nostrils. But the strangest of all things in this premature theater was the audience, which was composed of all the nationalities of the Old and New World, each wearing a costume of his own. The better class of English and American residents wore black coats and white cravats, and sat in the boxes with their wives, who were in evening dress, with flowers in their hair. The natives of California, Spanish in type, occupied the second tier. They, too, had their wives with them. The women were dark skinned, and wore high combs and the traditional mantilla, with a pomegranate flower coquettishly placed over the left ear.

The long haired half breeds in the stalls were dressed in velvet, with silk scarfs knotted around their waists, and metal buttons set thick on all the seams of their costumes. Several Parisian grisettes,

gay, smiling and noisy, with their faces framed in fluted caps, were scattered among the audience. Creoles, in white linen garments; Chinamen, in drapery of embroidered silk; a crowd of men from northern Europe, political exiles, Poles, Hungarians and Prussians, filled the parterre; American sailors in woolen shirts, negroes from the Antilles, French, Swiss and German were all mingled together.

There was not a vacant seat in the house, and almost every man wore a revolver or a *navaja* in his belt. A confused buzz of voices filled the house. Barberine had hardly time for a glance at this extraordinary *ensemble*; she was annoyed at the darkness of the house, it affected her nerves; but as the reflectors cast a good light on the stage, she determined to think no more about it, and to pay attention only to her *rôle*.

She danced that night as she had never danced before, not even in her first youth. She knew this, and knew, too, that never in her life had she looked better. To say that she pleased the public is to say nothing. She drove them wild.

There was one man in the crowd, however, who did not share the general enthusiasm, and this was the Vicomte de Saint Bertrand. Seated in the orchestra among the musicians, he watched every movement of his wife in the first act. He, as well as every one else, was struck by her beauty and by the spirit she displayed, but he knew her well, and was not likely to be deceived by appearances. He admired the courage that sustained her, but he felt

that all her strength lay in this courage; and seeing that she turned away frequently to draw a long breath, and that her feet and hands trembled, he said to himself, in despair, that Barberine might be able to dance three times more, four times possibly, and then she would break down as she had done in New York and New Orleans. She could never be relied upon to dance three times in the week, even for a month, to say nothing of a year.

When the public left their seats to go out for a breath of fresh air and a drink between the acts, Saint Bertrand rose too, but he went behind the scenes. Consternation was written on every feature.

"We must stay here for a month," he said to himself, "and then we shall have made little more than enough to pay our expenses to Europe; and what will we do when we get there? A *danseuse* without lungs and legs is of no more value than a lame horse; and I, when she talked, was foolish enough to believe that she was perfectly strong again! as if, at thirty, a woman could ever hope to regain her youthful strength and agility!"

While the too clear-sighted husband was talking in this way to himself, groups of men were in the corridor extolling the talents and the beauty of Barberine. Saint Bertrand was recognized as he passed, and the most important personages of the town complimented him most warmly. He answered with smiles, and strove to conceal his annoyance all the time, as he talked and shook hands, slowly making his way to the door which led behind the scenes.

As he passed through it, he felt an arm suddenly passed through his own, and he was drawn toward a window through which the moonlight shone. To his infinite surprise, Saint Bertrand recognized in this stranger his old friend, Rogatchef. Rogatchef had arrived the previous evening, in San Francisco. It was his yacht that lay in the harbor, and he who had bought Cerviero's stall, in order to see Barberine dance once more. For many weary months, his eyes had not rested on a pretty woman; and Barberine's beauty revived all his former passion. He did not say this to Saint Bertrand, who, however, was acute enough to divine it. No one ever knew just what occurred in that moon-lit window between this unworthy husband whose hopes had just been so rudely shattered, and this imbecile millionaire, urged on by the desires he had vainly cherished for years. They both spoke with great earnestness, but in lowered voices. Rogatchef, knowing Saint Bertrand as well as he did, did not take the trouble to choose his words; and the other, who was utterly without shame, listened quietly after the first surprise and without a blush. A few words only could have been distinguished by any one under the window.

"No," said Saint Bertrand, "she will never consent!"

"We will use force, then!" answered his companion.

"I don't see how, I am sure."

"I am certain that she has not recognized me, for she never once turned her eyes to the side where

I sat. You must not tell her I am here. Do not even pronounce my name, for her suspicions may be awakened ; but to-morrow morning, propose to her to visit the yacht and take a little sail. I will not appear at first ; but when we are outside, you can go back to town in the gig, and I will come out of the cabin. I am inclined to believe that in the voyage from San Francisco to Saint Petersburg, I shall bring her to terms !”

“This might be done, to be sure,” stammered Saint Bertrand, growing very pale, “but—”

The discussion halted for a moment, and then went on more briskly.

“Whatever you ask,” said Rogatchef.

“Make your own offer,” replied the husband.

Rogatchef mentioned a sum in a low voice. Saint Bertrand shook his head, and Rogatchef, shrugging his shoulders, added another cipher ; and the husband uttered the monosyllable “Yes,” but presently he added with evident distrust : “Have you as much money as that with you ?”

The Prince murmured “Diamonds,” and with a pressure of the hand exchanged between them, these worthy gentlemen separated, the Prince adding :

“To-morrow, at ten.”

Saint Bertrand went back to his seat among the musicians, and Rogatchef left the theater, feeling that his business there was over.

While this infamous bargain was thus concluded between these two men, another passing through the corridor recognized them both, and hearing Barbe-

rine's name, slipped quietly into a dark corner, and listened. This man was Gaskell, who, as we know, had not been duped by Saint Bertrand's affected repentance. He knew Rogatchef by sight, and meeting him so unexpectedly in San Francisco, and seeing him in this earnest conversation with the Viscount, a strange and painful suspicion shot through his mind, and he determined to hear what they said. He contrived to hear enough to understand it all. When the two men walked away, the Impressario asked himself if he had lost his senses, and stood transfixed, hardly knowing what to do to prevent this unheard-of iniquity.

He was recalled to action by a salvo of applause from the audience. The second act had begun, and Gaskell moved mechanically toward the *coulisses*, intending to warn Barberine of his discovery as soon as the ballet was over.

Barberine danced the second act as she had danced the first, with all her heart; but she realized that she lost her breath very often, as did both Gaskell and Cerviero as they watched her with growing anxiety. Saint Bertrand asked himself if his wife would be able to finish the ballet. He saw her knees tremble, her lips pale, and large, dark circles spread under her eyes each time that she slowly turned on the points of her toes. Her eyes sought his, and seemed to say:

"You see! I can do it."

The courageous creature was sustained by the idea that the future of her husband and herself de-

pended on that evening. Cost what it might, she resolved not to give up, but the perspiration poured down her limbs, her heart beat like a trip-hammer, and her throat contracted as if in the grasp of an iron hand. She danced now mechanically, and hardly knew what she did. The spectators were enchanted with her grace and her beauty, and had no suspicion of the torture she was enduring. They sat with eyes fixed and lips parted; they did not even applaud, lest they should break the illusion.

The last scene of *La Sylphide*, as is well known, begins with a long discussion between the farmer James and the sorceress. While old Madge offers the impudent lover the magic scarf which will deprive the girl of her liberty, Barberine walked slowly up and down the *coulisses*, and suddenly met Gaskell face to face. She was struck with consternation as she looked at him, and thought some terrible misfortune had occurred. She questioned him with all a woman's impatience. Gaskell, unfortunately, did not remember that she was to dance again in the most important scene of the ballet, and he told her his terrible story.

Barberine, as she listened, felt a sword pierce her heart. Was it possible that he to whom she had forgiven so much could have sold her in this way? and just at the moment, too, when she was making such superhuman exertions for him. She said not one word, but tears streamed from her eyes. But the ballet was to be finished; little did the public care for the private sorrows of the *danseuse*. She

was standing weeping when Cerviero turned toward her to hasten her; then mechanically she did her duty and danced.

Will my readers believe that she not only danced, but danced well? It is true that this last scene was somewhat in accord with her mood, for La Sylphide dies, and dies, too, by the hand of him whom she loves.

When Barberine, after vainly seeking to meet her husband's eyes—the wretch dared not look at her—fell upon the stage, a shiver of fright ran through the house, for the scene was wonderfully real!

As the curtain went down there was a perfect uproar; the public had regained its self-possession, and was eager to manifest its admiration. Barberine, crushed by fatigue and sorrow, was obliged to appear. The curtain being partially lifted, she advanced to the foot-lights and made a series of pirouettes, mingled with deep courtesies. This manner of saluting the public, common enough among the *danseuses* in Paris, was then unknown in San Francisco, and supposed to be original. Naturally it was a great success. Unfortunately, as Barberine bent low for the fifth time, she had reached a position directly in front of her husband. Their eyes met. Then, as if the *danseuse* had been nailed there, she stood for some moments without a smile, her knee bent, her skirts spread out very near the foot-lights, which had continued to smoke all through the evening.

Suddenly, as she gazed, her eyes flashing with an indignation of which only her husband knew the secret, she felt a sudden heat, and at the same time a cry of fright ran around the house.

La Sylphide's skirts were on fire.

The next few moments were indescribable. The crowd started up with one movement, and pushed violently against the doors. Barberine, mad with terror, rushed about the stage, a blaze of fire, and uttering a succession of shrieks, and no one went to her assistance. The coryphees were all huddled together, fearing that the flames would catch their gauze skirts; the machinists were too frightened to move. Gaskell and Saint Bertrand awoke from their torpor and made unheard-of efforts to catch the poor soul as she ran, but it was impossible. Gaskell had succeeded in throwing a cloak over her head and face to preserve them from the flames, but she escaped before he could throw her down and crush them out with his hands, and the agonized old man could now only stand still and look on.

Saint Bertrand had succeeded in climbing on the stage from the orchestra, and was doing his best by voice and swiftness of movement to induce his wife to stand still, but she neither saw nor heard him. Fifteen hundred persons were looking on in breathless awe at these three persons on the stage, when suddenly a fourth figure appeared there. It was Eytmin, who had been sitting in the upper gallery, and at first could not realize that this moving mass of flames was his beloved mistress. He clam-

bered down, at the risk of his life, and dropped upon the stage. He did not hesitate a moment— notwithstanding Barberine's shrieks, he grasped her by the waist, threw her on the floor, and succeeded in putting out the flames.

The spectators were transfixed—a silence as of death pervaded the house as Eytmin, kneeling by Barberine's side, lifted the cloak that had been thrown over her by Gaskell. Her face was unharmed, as were her shoulders and breast, but she was so horribly burned over the bowels and back that the physicians among the audience, who had hurried to the stage, announced that she had but a few hours to live.

CHAPTER XXXII.

POOR BARBERINE.

A great crowd accompanied the litter on which Barberine was carried home, and men armed with torches preceded the sad procession. Eytmin and Gaskell walked on either side, and the coryphees, forgetting that they were in their ballet costume, followed also, weeping as they went.

Imprecations escaped from the crowd that looked on. Some among them censured energetically the administration of the theater, who should, they said, have covered the footlights with a grating. The machinists were accused of looking on and making no attempt to save the *danseuse*. Eytmin's courage was greatly praised. Loud talking resounded in all the streets through which the litter was carried, and heavy footfalls jarred the wooden sidewalks. Occasionally a groan of pain came from Barberine, followed by a few words of consolation from the physician.

Where was Saint Bertrand? He was among the crowd, literally stupified by this terrible and unexpected event.

Since the moment that he had seen his wife one sheet of flames, his one thought had been that only

a moment before he had committed the crowning iniquity of his life, by agreeing to sell his wife, and that God had prevented this by taking her to Himself.

The people about him ventured on a word or two of consolation, but he did not even hear them, and as he could not summon courage to approach the litter, he followed it at some distance.

When the door of the house—the house from which Barberine had emerged so full of hope only a few hours before—was closed, the physician laid her upon cool linen sheets, and proceeded to dress the burns. White and with closed eyes, she lay without making a sound. No words, however, can describe her sufferings, which were mental as well as physical. The physician did all he could for her, and then gave her a soporific, but frankly said there was no hope of saving her life. He finally went away, saying that he would return in the morning, unless he received a message that his presence was no longer necessary.

Gaskell never left the bed. He was broken-hearted at seeing this Barberine, whom he had known from early childhood, and who was now the only creature he loved in the world, lying on this couch of suffering. The cruelest torture he had ever felt, he experienced when he saw her agony, and knew that he could not aid her. He had forgotten the bargain he had heard made just before this catastrophe, which had effaced all else from his memory. As to Eytmin, he had withdrawn to the

salon, feeling that he had no right to remain in the room of his mistress; but the door between the apartments was left open, and he could hear every sound. The poor fellow was as much overcome as was Gaskell. Since the death of his mother and the loss of his *fiancée*, he had concentrated all his affection upon Barberine, who had always been so good and kind to him. Was it not she who had watched over him in Moscow, when he was so ill? and then, too, he had learned to love her through the knowledge that he alone could defend her from her husband, and make her daily life endurable.

Saint Bertrand was seated at the head of the bed where, if Barberine opened her eyes, she could not see him. What was he thinking of? some one of my readers may ask. Literally, of nothing. He was precisely in the same state of mind which we have attempted to describe twice before — on the occasions of Wanda's death and Méléline's suicide.

This man, who was so audacious and energetic when he had a passion to satisfy, became absolutely inert, and as helpless as an aged woman, in the presence of those victims created by his passions. His conscience did not speak to him at these times; it crushed him.

The potion administered by the physician had not calmed Barberine. It had excited her nerves. After a brief interval, she became very restless, and found it impossible to lie still, in spite of the agony it cost her to move. She turned slightly on her pillows, and saw Gaskell who was quietly weeping.

The grief of her old friend touched her, and with her usual unselfishness, the poor thing sought to console him

“Do not weep, dear friend,” she said. “It is true that I am suffering horribly, but it will not be for long. After a most unhappy life, I am at last to have rest. I regret nothing and no one whom I leave behind me, except you, who have been to me like a father. But we shall see each other again—in a better world, perhaps! I entreat of you not to weep!”

Gaskell sobbed aloud, with his face buried in his hands; Saint Bertrand did not dare move, for he did not wish his wife to know that he was there. He had a vague suspicion that his wife had learned his last treason, which was so infamous that even he had no excuse to offer.

Presently she saw him, and with a shudder asked him to come nearer. He obeyed.

“Why did you do this thing?” she asked plaintively. “Why did you sell your wife? Why were you weary of me? Did I not work well? Have I not been always submissive, faithful and dutiful? My strength was returning, and I was glad to work for you. I watched over you with a mother’s care. I was ready to sacrifice any thing and every thing for your sake; but you sold me! If you had done this three months ago, when we were poor and I was ill and we had no money, I could understand it. Then we were at variance. But you have lately been kind and affectionate, watchful and tender,

and I bore no malice. I gladly forgave the past, and did not allow myself to think of it. This very evening I determined to win success, not for my sake so much as for your own; and this is the time you select to sell me! Are you mad? Speak to me! Did you ever love me? Were you always influenced merely by interested motives? You once thought me beautiful, and I believed you to be happy when your arms were around me. My God! My God! can it be that men are so different from women?"

These words were uttered in heart-rending tones, amid cries of pain, for it is easier to restrain manifestations of physical agony than of mental sorrow. Barberine's voice was hoarse, and a lurid light glittered in the eyes that had hitherto been so soft and sweet.

He did not speak, and she went on.

"Do you think I would have submitted to be sold like a horse or a dog? You do not know me. I would have thrown myself into the sea, sooner. And I was so gay," she added after a moment's silence. "I was in the mood for dancing. The belief that your love for me had come back, restored all my courage."

She began to weep, and presently, turning quickly to her husband, she said anxiously:

"What is going to become of you now?"

This was too much. She forgot herself to think of him. The dastard's heart was touched. He sank on his knees at the side of the bed, exclaiming;

"What, indeed, shall I do without your loving presence?"

Seeing that he had some feeling for her, she, too, was moved, and did her best to comfort him.

"Do not weep. Besides, who can tell? I am young, and I may recover. But how are we to live if I can not dance?"

This was her last thought. The agony which had been somewhat dulled by the opiate now returned so sharply that Barberine was nearly choked. Gaskell wrung his hands in despair. Saint Bertrand looked on helplessly. Eytmin, who had heard all, hurried into the room, and cast a look of hate upon his master, and stood despairingly by the side of Barberine's bed. She saw him, and tried to smile, but the pain continued, and her strength was momentarily passing away. Her eyes, her lips, her feet and her hands all trembled convulsively, and tears rolled down her cheeks; each breath was agony. She said over and over again:

"My God! How I suffer! Just to think of it! Burned alive!"

She tried to pray, but her words were unintelligible. This lasted for ten minutes, at the end of which, seeing her motionless, Saint Bertrand leaned over her. Barberine's sufferings were over, and her husband turned away with a sob.

Meanwhile the morning had come, and a crowd gathered before the door. Two men came up to ask for news. One of these was Cerviero, the other was Rogatchef, who had heard of the accident, but would

not credit it. When Eytmin confirmed the truth of the story, and told him of the death of his mistress, the Prince went back to his yacht, shuddering with horror.

"It is clear," he said, "that Fate has decreed that I was never to have this woman." That same day he left San Francisco without seeing Saint Bertrand again, and a few months later was established in St. Petersburg.

Cerviero, in the meantime, asked for an interview with Saint Bertrand, whom he found in a state of consternation that may easily be imagined. He was in the small *salon* near the room where Gaskell was watching over the dead woman, and was realizing most fully that in losing Barberine he had lost every thing. He was haunted, moreover, by the recollection of the somber scene when he saw his wife rushing about the stage, a column of fire.

"This is a most frightful thing, sir," said Cerviero, as he took a chair.

Saint Bertrand looked at him stupidly.

"What do you propose to do now, if I may ask?" continued Cerviero.

"What can I do?" answered the Vicomte, "except return to France."

"Well, but your affairs — how are they? Have you ready money?"

"No, I have nothing but the receipts from yesterday, which I presume will be enough to pay my passage."

"Yesterday's receipts?" cried Cerviero. "But they do not belong to you, sir."

Saint Bertrand passed his hand over his brow, and said, in a dull voice :

"And to whom, then?"

"To your creditors, of course."

Saint Bertrand did not seem to understand.

"My creditors?" he repeated.

"To be sure! You know you hired your house at the rate of four thousand francs per month, and the theater for six thousand for each representation. Of course you owe me for one month's rent, and for one night at the theater, which makes just ten thousand francs. The receipts were nine thousand one hundred and eighty-seven francs, so we are nearly square."

"Then," said Saint Bertrand, with a frown, "you will have to lend me the money to get back to France."

"Lend it to you?" replied Cerviero. "You forget that you are in San Francisco and not in Paris; here there is no such thing as credit; no one lends except on good security, and at a most formidable rate of interest, say ten or twelve per cent. monthly. I beg your pardon, what did you say?"

"I was saying that it was horribly dear," answered Saint Bertrand; "but I must do it, I suppose."

"But what security have you to offer?"

"None. I can only give you my note."

"Which I can't accept!" cried Cerviero. "I

can't go to France after you, you know, if you do not pay me ; besides, I have no funds now that are not invested."

"Then what am I to do," answered Saint Bertrand, turning pale. "What is to become of me?"

"That is for you to decide, sir."

"But don't you see, Monsieur Cerviero, that I am in a most desperate position ; will you not aid me in some way ?"

"I should be most happy to do so, I assure you," answered Cerviero. "And if you would accept some employment."

At this word Saint Bertrand clenched his fists, which his companion did not notice, and continued in a familiar tone.

"Only, sir, you must make up your mind to put your pride in your pocket, for there are no places here, as in Europe, where you can do nothing, and draw your salary all the same ! But any man with courage and resolution can make money enough in a year, by diligent labor, to pay his passage back to France."

"What sort of labor do you mean ?" asked the Vicomte.

"Oh, a hundred kinds, for professions which in Europe bring in nothing are very lucrative here. For example, masons and carpenters make from forty to fifty francs per day ; servants' wages are usually five hundred francs per month ; laundresses four hundred ; coolies a thousand ; even the boot-blacks ask and receive twenty-five cents

for a pair of boots, and dish-washers get, on an average, from six to eight thousand francs per annum; but theirs is a hard life, and I should not advise you to try it."

"What the deuce do you mean? I a dish-washer?" cried Saint Bertrand, in a rage.

Cerviero's quiet tone exasperated him beyond endurance.

The Vicomte continued: "Do you wish me to be a mason, or a boot-black? I advise you not to jest with me."

"God forbid, sir!" answered Cerviero, in the same familiar tone. "I have too much respect for you in your affliction. But I assure you that the best people here do just such things. They came to San Francisco, not from their own will, but from necessity, and they consequently submit patiently to the life here. You will find among the boot-blacks lawyers and merchants, the same among the masons; while bankers and gentlemen wash dishes with all the philosophy in the world. In this country no work is degrading. Nevertheless, I do not advise you to undertake any thing of this kind; you would soon become impatient under such a yoke. But if you are reasonable, I can propose something to you which will, I think, bring you in money enough to do as you choose in regard to returning to France."

Saint Bertrand drew a long breath.

"What is it?" he asked.

"You must not be offended!"

"Not I. Go on."

"I assure you it will be a splendid thing for you ; a waiter in a restaurant is much needed by me, and I feel that you can perform the duties with entire success."

"A waiter in a restaurant?" shouted the Vicomte. "Are you mad, to propose such a thing?"

"I am sure, sir," said Cerviero, much disturbed, "I did not mean any harm. I supposed, simply, that you were in very great need ; and why should you consider such a position as so very degrading ? My five sons act as waiters in my *café*, and I very often, on a pinch, condescend to assist—if people are in a hurry, you understand. If you choose to enter my establishment, you need not look on me as your master, but as your patron. You need not wear an apron, if it is that which troubles you. Every body is very polite here, and you will be treated with entire respect, as you will see."

But Saint Bertrand was not dazzled by these words. Could it be that he, once the glass of fashion and mould of form, must sink to the level of a waiter in a *café* ? He would sooner die !

"I shall go to the mines," he said to Cerviero, with a look of disdain.

"Come, now, my dear sir," entreated Cerviero, "you know nothing about the work of the mines ; if you went you would be back here in three days. No, no, do not be rash ; think well before you refuse my offer."

The two men continued to dispute. One was

angry, the other conciliatory. Cerviero was not deficient in vanity, and he thought how fine it would be if he could address his head-waiter as Monsieur le Vicomte! What a good effect it would produce on people, mad as were the Americans in regard to rank.

Suddenly the door opened, and Gaskell, pale and broken, appeared before them

"Would you have the kindness," he said, "to speak in lower voices, or carry your discussion elsewhere? It is not decent to make so much noise near a dead body."

Cerviero apologized, saying that he did not know the dead woman was so near, and profiting by the opportunity, he asked if he might be permitted to look once more upon the poor lady.

Gaskell opened the door, and Cerviero entered the room. He looked at the body. Barberine's features were no longer contracted with suffering; she had the peaceful air of a sleeping child, and there was neither scar nor blemish on her face. Cerviero was greatly surprised. He had never before seen death, and was ignorant of the strange beauty and majesty it imprints on some faces. All at once, as he stood gazing, Cerviero clapped his hand to his forehead, and rushing back to the *salon*, he grasped Saint Bertrand's arm.

"I have an idea, sir," he exclaimed, "and you will be all right."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CERVIERO'S IDEA.

"What on earth do you mean?" asked Saint Bertrand.

Cerviero, before replying, closed the door carefully, first looking up and down the corridor to see that no one was listening. Then, placing his lips to the Vicomte's ear, he said, hurriedly:

"You admit that you are in a most desperate position, do you not?"

"I do, indeed; and what then?" asked Saint Bertrand.

Cerviero drew him to a window, and slightly lifting the curtain, pointed down upon the crowd before the house.

"Look at these Americans," he said. "They are rough to our eyes, and their manners most certainly are neither amiable nor elegant; but they have one quality which is by no means common in the country in which we live — they absolutely worship women."

"What are you aiming at?" interrupted Saint Bertrand.

"At just this," answered his companion. "If this crowd is now stationed before this door, is it not

because a woman lies in it who has lost her life by the saddest of accidents? Is it not because she was not only a woman, but also French, and a *danseuse*? A *danseuse*, in American eyes, you know, is the personification of the ideal. This crowd is in despair at the loss of the pleasure she had promised them, and at the terrible fate of the pretty creature who had charmed them by her art."

"What are you coming to?" asked Saint Bertrand again.

"Wait a moment. How much money do you want, to get back to France and to start again in the world?"

"About twelve thousand francs," answered Saint Bertrand.

"Very well, Monsieur le Vicomte," said Cervoiero, paling with mingled fear and hope. "I will give you these twelve thousand francs for your wife's body!"

Saint Bertrand started back.

"My wife's body!" he cried. "What do you intend to do?"

"I will tell you. Three months ago, in a *café* here, a man was killed in a row. The master of the *café* conceived the idea of buying the corpse of this man, for his family was not very prosperous, and were glad of the money, and so sold it. It was exhibited for two days in the great hall, and he made a large amount."

Saint Bertrand was deadly pale.

"Do you really mean it?" he stammered.

"Unquestionably. All these people who promised themselves the pleasure of seeing your wife dance, will gladly go to look at her now. I would exhibit her in her Sylphide dress. It will make her much more interesting!"

Saint Bertrand did not shrink from selling his wife when she was alive, but this idea shocked him. Up to this time he had been able to gloss over, or conceal his misdeeds; but now the whole world would learn from the newspapers this act he had committed in San Francisco, and what would be thought of him in Paris, he asked himself.

He uttered an abrupt "No," and began to walk up and down the room.

"If this is your decision, sir," resumed Cerviero, "I really can see nothing but for you to accept the position I offered, as waiter in my *café*."

And he went away, leaving Saint Bertrand in a dumb rage. When the man was half way down the stairs, the Vicomte opened the door and called him back, and the bargain was quickly concluded.

Fifteen minutes later, Gaskell left the room where Barberine lay, to allow two women to begin the process of embalming her. The Impressario supposed they were only to perform the ordinary offices due to the dead. Before going away, he pressed a kiss upon the cold, pale brow, and cut off a lock of her blonde hair, and then, as if he left all hope behind him, staggered from the house. Near the door, on a wooden bench, sat Eytmin, grave and pre-occupied. He made room at his side for Gaskell,

and they both sat silently, gazing at the sea which they saw spread before them.

Gaskell's appearance furnished new food for the curiosity of the crowd. His white hair, the sorrow imprinted upon his features, excited the strongest pity. The women and children drew nearer him, and he was soon the center of a sympathetic group. No one knew who he was, and no one among them dared ask. Finally a child, braver and bolder than the others, approached him coaxingly, and standing by his knee, said timidly :

"Are you the father of the poor burnt lady?"

"Yes, my child, I was her father," answered Gaskell, in a choked voice, as tears streamed from his eyes.

Meanwhile there appeared at the end of the street a number of men bearing placards, but they did not pass before the house where Barberine lay; but the crowd saw them, and passed on to read the placards, and very soon Eytmin and Gaskell were left alone. They exchanged a few words. Gaskell was utterly worn out, and laid his head on the shoulder of the faithful servant, who was absorbed in one fixed idea. Toward evening Cerviero sent some men to Saint Bertrand, to ask if he wished to dispose of his wife's wearing apparel; and these men carried off a number of trunks. Eytmin looked closely after them, but seeing that they were not his master's, sank back on his bench.

When it was quite dark, four men entered the house. They had with them a long coffin and a

heavy pall. Eytmin showed them in without distrust, supposing they had come to lay the body in the coffin. They came out before long, bearing the same burden with infinite precautions. Eytmin was astonished to see that Saint Bertrand was not with these men, and equally so by the fact that there was only a white sheet thrown over the coffin. His astonishment increased when he saw that neither priest nor friend followed the body.

But as he was always chary of words, he made no observation, but rising from his bench, he slipped his arm through Gaskell's, and they both with uncovered heads followed the small procession. The porters were only American sailors in red shirts. Eytmin wondered at this, but he said to himself that each city had its own customs, and those of San Francisco were probably opposed to any paraphernalia of woe. He wondered, moreover, at the road the sailors took. Instead of going up toward the hill, on the summit of which stood the Catholic church and cemetery, they descended toward the shore, and the crowd became momentarily more dense. Before long it was almost impossible for them to make their way between the masses of people. The night was very dark, and the streets unlighted. The shops, too, were closed at sunset, as usual. At the end of the street through which the bearers were carrying their burden, stood an enormous building, blazing with colored light, which had a most festal air. Eytmin, as he approached this building, recognized it as Cerviero's

establishment ; but he could not imagine what was going on.

"What is it ?" asked Gaskell.

"I do not know," said Eytmin, in reply ; "but hold my arm fast, and we will soon see!"

As he spoke, the crowd wrapped them about and bore them onward, and, in spite of their struggles, swept them far away from the litter and its bearers. They could see it carried through the door into Cerviero's establishment amid loud applause.

Gaskell asked himself with horror what this meant. He saw the crowd gather together and then form into a long column, as at the door of a theater on the occasion of some extraordinary representation. Presently the head of this column entered the *café*, where a man, standing on a high box at the door, entreated every one with all the strength of his lungs, to be patient :

"Each will come in, in turn," he said ; "all those who pay, at least. Don't push, and keep your tempers!"

"Hurra ! Barberine forever !" shouted the crowd.

Eytmin recognized in the man at the door one of Cerviero's *employés*, and, stimulated by the wish to know whither the remains of his beloved mistress had been borne, drew Gaskell on by the arm, and took his place among those who were waiting. They soon found themselves pushed along to the *café*, every window of which was illuminated, and threw a strong light on the crowd pressing toward the door. The door was thrown wide open, and on

each side was one of the *employés* of the theater, both receiving the money from outstretched hands.

"Four shillings, gentlemen!" they said. "Four shillings, each!"

"Hurra for Barberine! Hurry up, can't you?" cried a voice from the crowd.

Eytmin, seeing that he could not enter the *café* without paying, took eight shillings from his pocket, and still dragging Gaskell, stood at last on the threshold. But as soon as Cerviero's *employé* saw them, he recognized them, and refused to take the money that Eytmin offered.

"Go on, gentlemen," he cried. "We do not wish you to pay."

The two men were, at last, in the immense hall. All the tables had been taken away, and a blinding light was reflected from the tall mirrors. At the back of the hall where the counter had been, was now a platform covered with red velvet, over which was a canopy of crimson satin. Shrubs and flowers were on either side, and the whole scene resembled, when seen at a distance, one of those splendid Shrines which are carried about in Catholic countries, on the day of the *Fête Dieu*.

But under the dais, instead of the sacred vases, was something which Eytmin could not distinctly see; he heard, however, long murmurs of astonishment and admiration from the crowd which passed slowly before this platform. They lingered for a minute, and then passed out by a side door, their places being instantaneously taken by others.

When Gaskell and Eytmin, in their turn, approached this platform, a heart-rending spectacle elicited from their lips a cry of anguish. Upon the platform was a couch of red silk, so inclined that at a distance it seemed almost vertical. Lying on this bed, with her head raised upon a cushion, was Barberine in her Sylphide dress, with her feet in her white satin slippers, and her slender hands resting on her tulle skirts. Wings of peacock feathers, exactly like those she had worn at the theater the night previous, were spread at her back; her lovely blonde hair was drawn up upon the top of her head as she had been in the habit of wearing it. Her lips were closed, as were her eyes; but a dark line was seen under the lids. On her beautiful brow lay a wreath of flowers, similar to those she had herself woven for her first appearance in San Francisco. Indeed, it may have been the same, for the flowers were withered, and imparted to the serene face a look of sadness.

There was not the smallest trace of the burns she had received, for one arm was carefully concealed by folds of crape in which she was, in fact, almost enveloped. The crape was so fleecy that it looked like a cloud; and enormous clusters of roses were thrown upon Barberine and all about her. Her attitude was natural, and almost pathetic. Her head, turned a little on one side, displayed one of her dainty little ears, as exquisite as a sea-shell. But her corsage no longer heaved under her panting breath as of yore, and her cheeks, despite the pow-

der with which they were covered, were slowly assuming something of the violet tones of death.

Murmurs and exclamations were heard from the crowd:

“How beautiful!” said one.

“How graceful!” cried another.

“And so young! What a pity!”

“Would not any one think she was asleep?”

Some among the wealthiest women of San Francisco paid a livre for the pleasure of sitting on this platform near Barberine. Several of them were weeping, others praying, and all wondering at the perfection of this beautiful creature lying dead before them. Outside of the railing that protected the balcony, were sailors, negroes, miners, Indians from the Antilles, with painted bodies, and shells in their ears and nostrils, all staring at this tender creature in her dreamless sleep. They would have ruined themselves rather than lose so exciting a sight.

The dollars of America, the *douras* of Spain, and the golden louis of France were thrown over the railing and carefully picked up by Cerviero's children, who dropped them into their mother's capacious pockets.

The Indians paid their entrance fee with pellets of gold. At this fair, white creature with her wings and her fairy-like costume, they could have gazed forever. Some of these wild men were smoking, and others chewing tobacco—enjoying two pleasures at the same time.

Eytmin's and Gaskell's astonishment at seeing

Barberine, was as great as their grief, and yet they were carried away, as well as the others, by her marvelous beauty. Gaskell clasped his hands in prayer; but Eytmin, when his first emotion was over, was filled with hot indignation at this sacrilege, and not knowing how Saint Bertrand had profited by this exhibition, he was none the less certain that he had done so. He muttered between his closed teeth, "Coward! Blackguard! He manages to live on his wife even now that she is dead?"

The lights burned until midnight, and until that hour Americans and English, grave and solemn, wearing black coats and white cravats; Spaniards and Mexicans, somber and severe—for the spectacle was to them an impious one; sailors and half-naked savages; grisettes and wonder-struck Chinese, gazed upon all that remained of the beautiful Barberine. It seemed as if she had been born to be looked at—a strange destiny for this pure creature, who had never loved but once, and on whose lips no kisses but those of Saint Bertrand had ever rested, and yet on whom millions of men had gazed with desire!

It was time for the crowd to withdraw, for the face was growing dark under the eyes and about the temples; and Gaskell and Eytmin were at last permitted to lay her reverently in her coffin, and the next morning she was buried in the cemetery.

Saint Bertrand was not present. He had, an hour before, left San Francisco—he and a guide, on

mules, going in the direction of Monterey, from which port he intended to embark for France.

Eytmin, after the interment, sold his watch and all his wardrobe, hired a room at the inn for Gaskell, bought a musket and some cartridges, and then asked the way to Monterey. After going several miles, he beheld his master afar off; and he stood still with folded arms and looked at him. Then, as he hurried on, he muttered between his teeth:

“Your time is short, Judas!”

CHAPTER XXXIV.

EYTMIN.

The road which in 1849 led from San Francisco to Monterey, had been made by the miners along the slope of the Cordilleras, and ran through a wild and desolate country, bordered on one side by the sea, and on the other by high mountains and dense forests.

At the moment when Eytmin caught sight of Saint Bertrand, the latter was climbing a steep path. His guide, a native of California, was dressed in a loose jacket and leather breeches. He went first, stiff and erect on his mule, driving before him the one that carried the baggage. Saint Bertrand followed slowly, indifferent to the beauty of the scenery. Since he left San Francisco, he had been thinking of all the persons who had figured in his eventful life. First he counted those whom he had known and who were now dead, and remembered with a shudder how many he had sent to their last home through his evil deeds—Wanda, and her husband, and also the unhappy men whom he had delivered into the hands of the Muscovites; Méléline, who had killed herself, because he had refused to assist in the work of expiation, which could alone en-

able her to endure an existence rendered insupportable by remorse; then his wife, so devoted and faithful, whom he had made miserable, and had finally seen burned to death before his eyes.

What had he gained by all these crimes? The ill opinion of all who knew him, and finally this utter poverty, which was all the more difficult to bear because he bore it alone.

But as he looked back on the past, he by no means reproached himself, for he regarded it all as fatality—a most convenient pretext for people whose moral sense is obliterated by selfishness. If he had had a fortune, he said to himself, and had not been compelled to struggle, his life would have been a very different one, and he would not now be compelled, at thirty-five, to begin the world anew. It was not his victims he pitied, it was himself!

Then envy gnawed his soul with her sharp teeth. He thought of all those whom he had known, who were now leading a luxurious existence; of Rogatchef, who had left San Francisco; of Cerviero, the rascal who had enriched himself so quickly and easily; of Cocodès, who now bore the title of Duc, and of many another. He saw them all with their hands full of money, gay, smiling, and at ease; and he uttered sighs of rage and despair.

Had he not failed in every thing? Had he not suffered a series of disappointments? Had his ambition ever been gratified, and had he not seen prizes just beyond his reach all through his life?

He hated himself and every body else, and fully

realizing this, he reached an angle in the path from whence the descent was rapid and precipitous. The sea here disappeared behind lowering masses of rock, and far above him he beheld the summits of the mountain lost in the azure of the sky. The sun threw on the parched soil, the shadows of some old oaks, and there was not a sound except the steady tread of the mules.

The guide passed the angle of the path. The mule with the luggage was in advance, and Saint Bertrand was totally alone. Suddenly the fancy struck him that he heard an odd sort of noise, like the click of a revolver. He mechanically carried his hand to his own in the holster of his saddle, at the same time looking around, but he saw nothing, and heard nothing more. He hurried on his mule, and turning the angle, beheld his guide some fifty feet below; but as he looked to his right, he saw yet another thing, which was a gun steadied upon a rock, and planted full upon him.

To throw himself on one side was impossible. Rocks shut him in on the right and on the left like walls. Saint Bertrand dropped flat on the back of his mule, and shouted to his guide. As he did so, the gun was discharged, and Saint Bertrand's mule, shot through the head, fell over upon the Vi-comte's left leg.

The guide, who saw what had happened, thought Saint Bertrand was killed, and hurried on toward Monterey, regarding the luggage and the mule that bore it as his lawful prey.

The Vicomte tried to rise, but he found it impossible to lift the mule. He heard a noise above him, and supposing it to be his aggressor, he drew his revolver; but he had no time to use it. A blow that he received on the arm, caused the pistol to fly some ten feet, and in the man who stood at his side, he to his great surprise recognized the valet, whom he had left to shift for himself in San Francisco.

Eytmin lost no time in discussion. While Saint Bertrand reproached him and asked for an explanation of his motives for this crime, he took off his wide silk sash and tied his hands behind his back. Then lifting the dead mule and disengaging his master's leg, he tied his feet together. This being done, he hoisted his former master upon his shoulder and carried him some thirty feet to an oak tree, under which he deposited his burden, and seated himself on a stone facing the Vicomte, whose eyes were fixed on the guide hurrying toward Monterey.

"Do not call me Poielski," said Eytmin; "that is not my name. I am one of the soldiers in that Polish insurrection, which, thanks to you, was a massacre."

Saint Bertrand, on hearing these words, knew very well that he was lost, and wished to exculpate himself; but Eytmin would not allow him to speak.

"The Countess Wanda loved you," continued the Pole. "She confided the secret of our plot to you. You denounced it and her to Russia. Her death and the death of her husband, as well as of thousands of my countrymen, is due to you, and fol-

lowed swiftly on your denunciation. Now, what have you to say?"

"I say that it is false!" cried the Vicomte.

"No," said Eytmin, "I heard Madame Mélédine reproach you for your treachery, and you did not deny it."

Saint Bertrand shivered. Again he tried to speak, and again Eytmin cut him short.

"I have not said all," he said. "God gave you a wife, who was more tender and more devoted than any other woman that breathed. How did you recompense her devotion? You tried to sell her alive; as that could not be, you sold her dead body. You see that I know all your villainy. I know that you have betrayed every human being that ever loved you—every human being who tried to serve you. Now prepare to die!"

As he uttered these last words, Eytmin rose and left his master and all his passionate appeals at the foot of the tree. He went toward the mule, and lifting up the saddle-flap, drew out a long rope from the pocket. Saint Bertrand was sick with terror as he sat watching him. Eytmin quietly made a slip-noose in the rope.

"In the name of Heaven," cried the Vicomte, "what are you going to do?"

"You will find out presently," was the reply; and going to the oak, he threw the rope over a forked branch, some fifteen feet from the ground.

"Do you intend to hang me like a dog?" asked Saint Bertrand,

-“Not like a dog, sir, but like a traitor,” said Eytmin, as he adjusted the rope around his master’s neck.

“Now, sir,” he said, “it is time for you to pray to God to receive your soul!”

The Vicomte was horribly pale.

“Untie me,” he urged. “I will not denounce you, and I will give you any thing you ask.”

“Pray to God,” answered Eytmin.

“I swear to you that it was not I who denounced your countrymen.

“Pray!” repeated Eytmin, sternly.

Saint Bertrand hesitated. All his features contracted. It was evident that he was trying to make up his mind to say something. Then in a hoarse voice, he murmured:

“In Barberine’s name, spare me this ignominious death.”

Eytmin, on hearing the name of his beloved mistress, started, but he controlled himself, and said:

“Make your peace with your Maker.”

Saint Bertrand dropped his head—the word “mercy” was upon his lips, but he did not utter it.

He looked around to see if there was no possible succor, but he saw nothing save the blue sky smiling calmly upon the lonely mountains. All his life passed before his eyes like a lightning flash—he trembled from head to foot.

“Oh, what an end!” he murmured,

Eytmin, with his foot against the trunk of the tree, held the rope in his hands. Suddenly he pulled it, and the traitor hung ten feet in the air.

“There is a God of Vengeance!” Eytmin muttered, gloomily.

CHAPTER XXXV.

LYNCH LAW.

When Eytmin saw that Saint Bertrand was motionless and dead, this man, who had just committed an act of such terrible justice, kneeled by the side of his victim, and prayed for the repose of his soul. Then, without troubling himself about the saddle and the various articles scattered about the ground, he slowly took his way to the town, the smoke of which he could see as a light blue haze in the distance.

The evening came on, the sun dropped toward the horizon, and silence fell over the land. No sound of bird or insect disturbed the stillness for a time. Suddenly, Eytmin heard a low, rumbling sound, like that produced by a body of men on the march. At first he was not disturbed, and continued to walk slowly on, with his hands behind his back. Like Saint Bertrand in the morning, he was recalling all the events of his life. He thought of his dead mother, his lost *fiancée*, his crushed land, and of his beloved mistress burned to death before his very eyes, and finally, of the traitor he had punished.

The noise of which we have spoken came nearer and nearer, and became so distinct, at last, that

Eytmin looked around. But he saw nothing but the oak, from which hung the body of his master, motionless among the trees. At this moment about thirty men, appearing suddenly from among the rocks, rushed toward him, led by Saint Bertrand's guide. Eytmin offered no resistance as they tied his hands. Each man, it seemed to him, spoke a different language. He looked at each one in turn, surprised at their roughness of appearance and their aggressive manner.

These men were miners, who were going from San Francisco to the *placers* of Monterey, when they were overtaken by the guide, who told them the story of Saint Bertrand's assassination. They were armed with hatchets, bowie knives, and pistols, and some among them carried guns. At this epoch, and in that country, in default of a regular government, each man was compelled to look out for himself. Learning what Eytmin had done, these miners turned out of their way to judge and punish him.

They drew him into an open space, and then forming a circle around him, they began to question him, each in his own tongue. This band was composed of Americans, Spaniards, and English; but among the group there were several whose light beards, fair skins, and blue eyes, indicated that they came, as did Eytmin, from the North of Europe. One of them attracted the attention of Eytmin by the peculiar character of his face, which indicated a Slavonic origin. Going up to him, Eytmin looked

him full in the face, and speaking in his own tongue, said:

"In the name of our country!"

Absolute silence followed these words. The miners looked at the two Poles, waiting for the explanation of this scene before they began the examination. But the guide broke in:

"That is the man!" he cried. "It was he who killed the gentleman that hired me. He killed him with his gun."

"That is not true," answered Eytmin. "I killed the mule."

"Then where is the traveler?"

Eytmin pointed to the oak tree.

At the sight of this body, which they had not before seen, the miners looked at each other with profound surprise. Two men rushed to the tree and cut the rope, but came back presently and said the victim had ceased to live.

"Why did you hang that man?" asked the oldest of the band, an American.

"Because he sold my country," answered Eytmin. And then speaking in French, which language was understood by most of the crowd, he gave the most exact details of Saint Bertrand's treason.

His passionate recital excited the sympathy of the Poles and Hungarians among the band.

"It is true, every word he says!" cried the man to whom Eytmin had just spoken. "I took part, myself, in that last insurrection at Varsovie, and the details he has given are entirely accurate."

"I tell you he killed the gentleman!" shouted the guide, "Search him, and see if I have lied or not."

Eytmin was searched, and upon him was found neither jewelry nor money.

"Did I look like a man who was hiding from the law when you met me?" he asked, quietly.

The miners looked at each other, struck by this question.

"Search the body, and you will see if I have robbed it."

Eytmin was taken to the foot of the oak tree. Upon the body was found a watch, jewels, and in Saint Bertrand's leather belt were the ten thousand francs in gold given him by Cerviero.

This discovery removed every lingering doubt in the minds of the miners. The accusation of theft was therefore abandoned. But he was asked by what right he took upon himself the administration of justice.

"By what right do you ask me this question?" he replied.

The rope that bound his arms was cut, as the miners—nearly all of whom were political refugees—could not reproach him for doing what they had intended to do themselves.

Saint Bertrand's body was buried at the foot of the oak, and Eytmin was allowed to go on with them. As he walked, he made inquiries as to the wages to be obtained at the mines.

"About thirty francs per day," was the answer.

"I will go there, and work with you," he exclaimed.

The next day he, with Gaskell, repaired to the *placers* of Mariposa, and remained there until the death of his companion.

Gaskell had had such a terrible shock in Barberine's death, that he could do very little, and Eytmin built for him a small hut, near the *placers*, placed him in it, and worked hard for both.

Sometimes on Sundays, while the miners were in town spending the money they had gained with such infinite toil, these two strolled under the trees. The eldest talked, and the youngest listened. Gaskell's mind and memory were much impaired; but he was fluent on the subject of Barberine—her early youth and her first success. He cited several incidents which proved her kindness of heart, and invariably terminated his recital in the same words:

"I have known her to be guilty of but one single folly, and that was her inexplicable, mad attachment to Saint Bertrand."

"No attachment is inexplicable or mad," answered Eytmin. "It is unquestionably a sad experience, for a good, honest man to see some rascal preferred to himself; but this is far better for him and for the world, than it would be if one were never to love. Let us look kindly on all such errors, for the hearts that are guilty of them are usually the noblest and the truest."

Gaskell mourned his dear Barberine for five

years, and then Eytmin laid him at the feet of her whom he had so loved.

He left San Francisco the following year, and went first to Varsovie, and then to Moscow. His uncle Leszek was dead, and Monsieur Tiphaine, whom his uncle had served long and faithfully, had returned to France. Eytmin, finding himself alone in the world, became very sad, and only recovered his serenity when he resolved to devote the remainder of his life to his country.

The work so nobly begun by the Countess Wanda, had been carried on by valiant spirits for eight years. Eytmin devoted himself to a new organization against Russia. The events of this conspiracy are well known, for they stirred every generous heart in Europe; but many an heroic act passed almost unperceived, and was not immortalized by pen or poet. The part that Eytmin played was known to few.

Early in the month of January, he took part in the combat of Polsk, and was fortunate in escaping into Prussian territory with his life. In the month of March, Eytmin succeeded in repassing the frontier again and joining the insurgents once more. Eight days later, his chief was informed that a Russian detachment, commanded by General Rogatchef, was firing the habitations of the peasantry all along the route of march, strangling women and murdering old men and defenceless children — crowning these noble acts by pillage, according to the usage among such intrepid heroes. One fine morning, Bonesa

marched onward and surprised the Russian detachment at bivouac.

Rogatchef, who had grown stout and old, was busy pacifying the country after the Russian fashion. Each prisoner that was brought in was instantaneously shot; and Barberine's former adorer, in his tight uniform, and his hand on his hip, sat on a rock looking at a pile of dead bodies. One glance from his black eyes was enough for the Cossacks, who had no compunction in striking their captives down. Bonesa's forces arrived in the night. At the first sound, Rogatchef shouted for his horse — not that he wished to fight, by no means. He merely desired to effect a prudent retreat; but unfortunately for him his horse had broken his halter and disappeared. Then Rogatchef began to tremble, for he knew that his hour had come. The cruel are always cowardly.

Eytmin was wounded, but he had recognized the Prince, and, dragging himself toward him, he shot him through the heart.

Eytmin died a month later, at the siege of Modlen. His chief paid every respect to his memory, and he was laid in his grave, covered with the enemy's flags which he had helped to win.

THE END.

WHAT THE PRESS SAY OF

ODETTE'S FROM THE
FRENCH

OF
ALBERT DELPIT. MARRIAGE

The N. Y. Evening Post, of April 19, says:

"The story is told with cleverness, and there is an intensity of interest in it which only very cleverly told dramatic stories have."

The Pittsburgh Telegraph, of April 9, says:

"A romance of remarkable power, but decidedly French in its many-sided phases."

The Philadelphia Times, of April 22, says:

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